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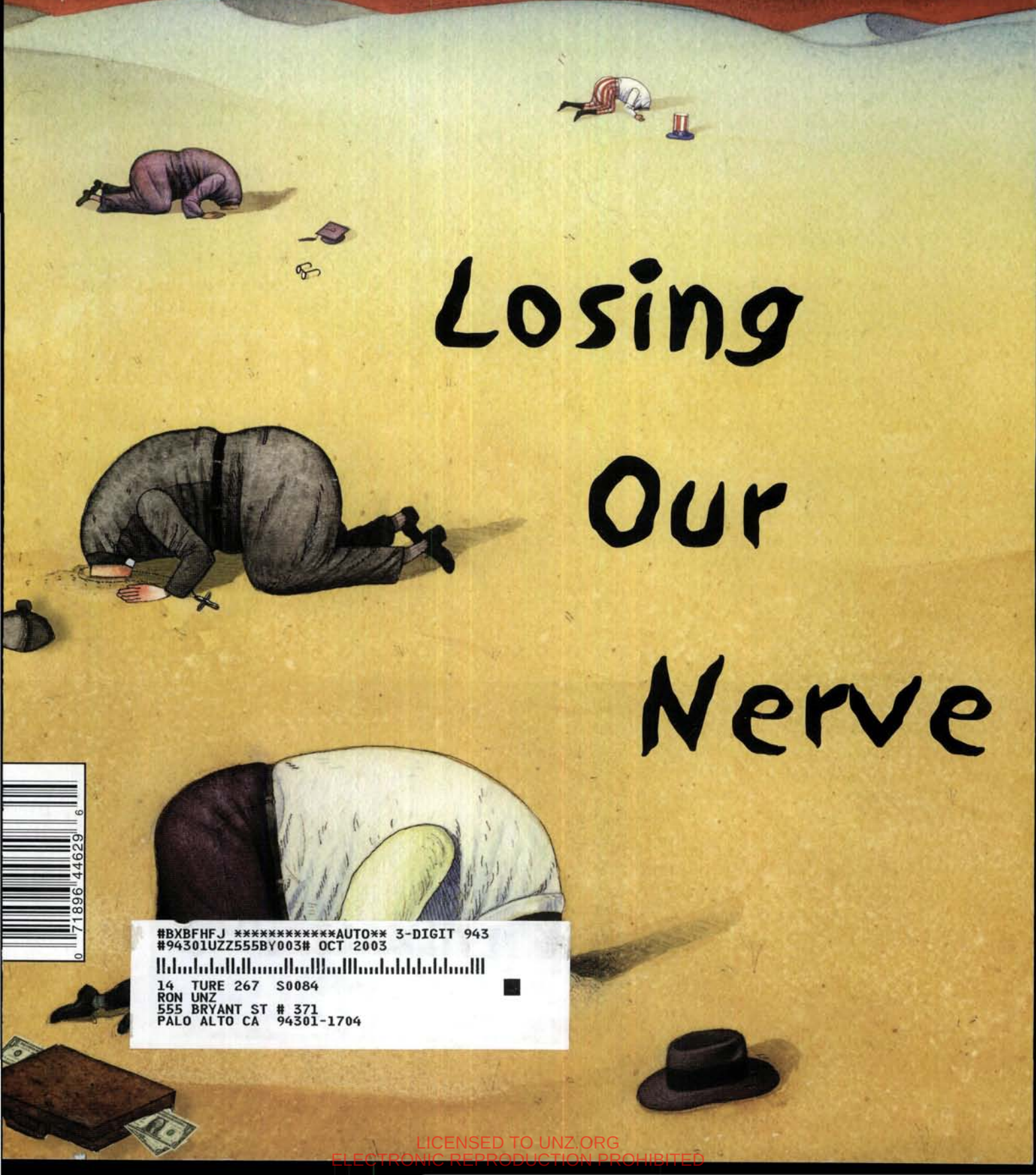

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In Praise of "Coming Out" (Or: You Tell & We'll Ask)

There's a debate taking place in Catholicism as to whether homosexual teachers in Catholic schools should "come out" — i.e., make their sexual orientation known to their students. In the Jesuit weekly, *America*, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, who has a reputation for being "gay-friendly," forthrightly staked out his position: "I urge that teachers in Catholic schools be free to allow their sexual orientation to be known [and]...the same thing should be true of priests and religious."

Fine. This is how we think the scenario will — or should — play out: A certain percentage of teachers, priests, and religious declare publicly that they're homosexual. They've broken the ice, and since they're *telling*, we can *ask*. The 64-thousand-dollar question of course is: "Are you celibate or not?"

Those who answer in the affirmative are given a medal to wear — no, we're *not* being facetious, for they *deserve* a medal in this day and age. As for those who answer in the negative, they are immediately fired or defrocked. (And yes, this applies to bishops too.)

And so as not to be discriminatory, unmarried *hetero*sexual teachers and *hetero*sexually-oriented priests and religious will also be expected to declare themselves, and under the same conditions.

Surely all *celibate* homosexuals will be delighted to "come out" under these terms. But there will be those homosexually-active teachers, priests, and religious who will not come out. And there will be some heterosexually-active priests, religious, and unmarried teachers who will not declare themselves. Now, those who do not come out or declare themselves will come under grave suspicion. Such teachers will have to fish or cut bait, and such priests and religious will have to do so too — decide if they're really going to keep the *vows* they *freely* made. Therefore all priests and religious and unmarried teachers will be *required* to come out or declare themselves and answer the 64-thousand-dollar question.

Soon all our unmarried teachers, and all our priests and religious, will be wearing those medals, for those who refuse to come out or declare themselves will also have been terminated. Why, this program just might eliminate the term "sex scandal" from the Catholic lexicon.

So thank you, Bishop Gumbleton, for a brilliant idea.

As you can see, we at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, an orthodox Catholic monthly magazine, like to have a little fun with our adversaries. We're "cheeky" (as *Newsweek* says) and we've got "attitude" (as Karl Keating says). There's a civil war going on in the Catholic Church — indeed, in all of Christendom — and we like to fight it wherever possible with wit and mirth. And we cover the full range of issues of concern to orthodox Christians.

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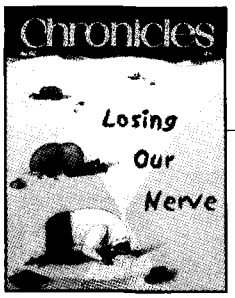

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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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On Arafat and Sharon

I agree with Srdja Trifkovic ("Time for Arafat to Go," *The American Interest*, February) that Yasser Arafat is not the best leader for the Palestinians and may well be an impediment to peace. But Dr. Trifkovic repeats a common misconception when he says, in effect, that the Israeli offer at Camp David was just too good to pass up. Despite what the media have led many to believe, Israel did not offer the Palestinians anything like an independent state. True, former prime minister Ehud Barak would have ceded 94 to 96 percent of the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinians, but these percentages are misleading. In fact, the proposal would have kept critical areas under Israeli rule so that the future Palestinian state would have been not a contiguous entity, like any other country, but a group of isolated Bantustans. Maps of the proposed settlement, which were never shown to the American people, make this abundantly clear. In short, the Barak proposal would have condemned Palestinians to perpetual servitude, and it is safe to say that no Arab negotiator could have accepted it.

As for Arafat's continued support of "terror," it is worth remembering that David ben Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, never moved against the Irgun or the Stern Gang until after the state of Israel was established and secured. Essentially, Sharon is demanding that Mr. Arafat do something that the Israelis themselves refused to do when fighting for their own state.

In March, a court in Brussels was scheduled to decide whether Sharon would stand trial on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide—charges stemming from his involvement in the 1982 massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon. But in the eyes of many, Sharon, with his bloody résumé, is already a certifiable war criminal. Meanwhile, he has deliberately undermined our recent coalition with the Muslim world by invading Bethlehem and five other main Palestinian-controlled towns, killing Palestinian officials with American-made Apache helicopters and building even more illegal settlements. Whenever peace is about to break out, his hit teams assassinate yet another Palestinian leader. By such actions, he fuels Muslim rage. With each passing day, it becomes more difficult to justify U.S. support, not of Arafat, but of Sharon.

In short, neither Arafat nor Sharon is the best of leaders, but to think that a replacement for Arafat would reach an acceptable peace agreement with Israel is illusory. Removing Arafat would begin the spiral toward a lengthy and bloody war of attrition, which would be dangerous not only for Israel but for the United States.

—*Frank J. Messmann*
Falmouth, MA

Dr. Trifkovic Replies:

On the whole, I have no quarrel with Mr. Messman's assessment of the unlovely Ariel Sharon or with his timely reminder that different brands of terrorism are morally equivalent, regardless of the identity of perpetrators.

With regard to the shortcomings of the proposed Camp David package, Mr. Messman is preaching to the choir: I agree that the deal was far from perfect, and it was certainly open to criticism on moral and practical grounds. We differ on what I wrote—which is a matter of record—and on what Yasser Arafat should have done in the final months of the Clinton presidency, which is a matter of opinion.

For the record, I did not say "in effect, that the Israeli offer at Camp David was just too good to pass up." I simply stated that the deal offered there "accurately reflected the limits of Israeli flexibility at that time." My statement was a value-neutral factual assessment, and neither side in the Middle Eastern divide would dispute it.

It is still my considered opinion that the Palestinian Arabs, and everyone else, would have been better off had Mr. Arafat signed the agreement offered at Camp David. Politics is the art of the possible: Within a few years, the Camp David framework would likely have evolved into the irreducible minimum, not the final and immutable limit of Palestinian aspirations. The Israeli with-

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drawal from the remaining four percent of occupied territories would have been only a matter of time, and Palestinian statehood would have become a reality.

In the 19th century, as small Christian nations of the Balkans struggled to regain their statehood after centuries of Ottoman Muslim misrule, a period of autonomy under the nominal suzerainty of the sultan for some—Serbs, Bulgars, Rumanians—was a painful but necessary stepping stone on the road to full independence. An incremental strategy worked well for Finland under the Romanovs—so well, in fact, that it possessed many attributes of *de facto* statehood well before the Bolshevik Revolution. Kossuth's uprising against the Habsburgs failed in 1848-49 because his maximalist demands went far beyond the limits of Vienna's tolerance, but the *Ausgleich* of 1867 created preconditions for full-fledged Hungarian statehood in the aftermath of World War I. Had the fathers of the Irish Free State demanded immediate full independence for the whole of Ireland—Ulster included—in the aftermath of World War I, the road to Eire would have been longer and bloodier. In all of these cases, the interim solution fell short of optimal demands but provided a firm foothold for the next generation.

As he endures the humiliation of the Israeli Defense Force bivouacking in his Ramallah compound, while the death toll on both sides moves from dozens into the hundreds, Mr. Arafat would be well advised to ponder these and similar lessons of history. I suspect that his private thoughts on the subject are closer to my assessment of what he should have done at Camp David than to Mr. Messman's.

On Russell Kirk's Legacy

A person who has been ravaged by liberalism might loudly attack Scott P. Richert for his reminiscences on Russell Kirk's noble reclamation project in Mecosta County ("Ghosts of the Midwest," *Views*, February), especially if that person were a partisan of all things Native American. The logic goes like this: Native Americans, the true Agrarians, first settled the Michigan countryside around Piety Hill. The despoliation caused by lumber barons was a blight against the sylvan heritage of the Native Americans, not merely an assault on the idyllic lands of the white man. Russell Kirk was a white man. Therefore, the fruits of his revival of Mecosta County should be tendered to those original victims of industrial expansion, the Native Americans.

Whether this logic makes any sense may not unduly worry the fretful liberal, impassioned as he often is by the animus of righteous indignation and the spirit of vindication; but Mr. Richert, for the sake of history as opposed to hagiography, might have mentioned those benighted redskins, if only to put into context the continual and complex problems of development. Development is necessarily bound up with an ongoing sequence of evolutionary events and dynamics of the sort that one sees when observing the prized wilderness. Species thrive; environments change; species perish.

To have expanded the logic behind such environmental fluctuations, Mr. Richert might have zeroed in on the poignancy of the very problem of Dr. Kirk's fecundity: With four daughters to his credit, values aside, the good doctor, like Henry Ford, did his own part in keeping strong "the forces of indiscriminate growth," which are abetted, in part, by population expansion. What the true liberal might not understand is that population growth does not logically lead to ecological degradation. There is no deterministic relationship between the two processes of life. It would have been to Mr. Richert's credit, however, if he would at least have outlined the conundrum of the relationship between expanding populations and diminishing resources. If Kirk's progeny decide that Wal-Marts are better than tree-lined saddle ridges and hardwood copses, then all those trees may go the way of all flesh all over again.

—*Tony Daley*
Chicago, IL

Mr. Richert Replies:

I'm not sure how a discussion of American Indians would have "put into context the continual and complex problems of development." The history of Indians in Michigan, a subject in which Dr. Kirk was very interested, is somewhat different from that of Indians on the East Coast or the Great Plains. Tribes were smaller, more settled, and (generally) more peaceful. Yes, there were Indians in Central Michigan (though not nearly as many as one might think), and many of their descendants remain there today, having intermarried with free blacks to become the "Old Settlers" of whom Dr. Kirk was so fond. Indians and Old Settlers were largely assimilated into the later European communities of Central Michigan, though there is a Chippewa reservation in Mount Pleasant, which runs an enormously successful casino and hotel complex, constructed by destroying a large stand of forest on the east side of town.

Which brings me to Mr. Daley's second point. Of course human beings make choices, and the Chippewa of Mount Pleasant have decided that their economic "progress" is more important than trees and virgin soil. Dr. Kirk's children and mine could both decide that "Wal-Marts are better than tree-lined saddle ridges and hardwood copses," though, to be honest, I doubt that either will. What, exactly, does this have to do with "population expansion"? Again, we're back to the question of choice or, more precisely, free will. An only child could choose Wal-Mart just as easily as a child with three siblings could—perhaps more easily, because Wal-Mart plays into the dynamics of instant gratification that, in general, afflict only children more fully than those from larger families. If the problem were not the texture of population expansion (for instance, growth of native populations *versus* immigration) but simply that sheer numbers translate into "indiscriminate growth" (something that Virginia Abernethy has decisively disproved, in these pages and elsewhere), then the only way to prevent our progeny from choosing Wal-Mart over hardwood copses would be to quit having children altogether. That would certainly preserve "nature," but without man to enjoy and tame it, what would that "nature" be?

On *Chronicles* in the Classroom

Congratulations to Dr. Roger McGrath for his efforts in the fight against cultural Marxism. Dr. McGrath's articles and columns in *Chronicles* have become required reading in the 11th-grade U.S. history courses that I teach at Hamilton High School in Los Angeles. Please continue your fine work.

—*Kieley D. Jackson*
Los Angeles, CA

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ANDREA YATES, the Houston mother recently sentenced to life in prison for drowning her five children in the bathtub, has become the latest horror story in an alarming string of domestic atrocities occurring in the wake of mental-health drug treatment. From the killer kids of Columbine, to the sickies of Springfield, Oregon, and Santee, California, to U.S. Capitol cop-killer Russell Eugene Weston runs an almost predictable pattern of antidepressant drug treatment (sometimes coupled with other psychotropic drugs intended to counter the side effects of the first or to deal with other alleged mental illnesses), followed by the loss of impulse control.

Maybe I'm missing the finer points of Mrs. Yates' preparation for trial, but does this make sense? Here's a woman who methodically drowned all five of her children, so doctors give her megadoses of psychotropic drugs until she is *sane* enough to stand trial for murders she committed while on megadoses of psychotropic drugs? If she is "sane" now, on the new drug regimen, how was anyone to know whether she was sane *then* on the *old* drug regimen?

Doesn't this bring criminal justice to a whole new level? If someone does something illegal—anything at all, like speeding—while taking a prescription psychotropic drug, couldn't lawyers just argue that, well, this person was prescribed thus-and-such drug by a doctor, and if the judge will simply order a revised drug regimen, the accused would be happy to drive down the same street again at the posted speed limit?

Of course, Mrs. Yates was said to be suffering from a particularly severe form of postpartum depression. Some hypothesized that her husband was partly to blame by keeping his wife continually pregnant, resulting in physical and emotional exhaustion. Others presumed some causal link between the "social isolation of homeschooling" and the simultaneous stress of infant care. Yet I could find no recorded incident of this magnitude in the days before birth control, modern anesthetics, and "opportunities" for women—when large families, long hours, and few amenities were the norm. Given the money the Yates family spent on mental-health treatment, including on psychiatrist Muhammad Saaed and various drugs prescribed over the years, Mrs. Yates could have hired some help at home. She could have had her "tubes tied"—a simple outpatient procedure—had she been desperate to avoid further pregnancies. But by all accounts, she loved her children and her husband dearly. Something else had to be going on.

There has been a shift in the ethical winds in the field of medicine. Psychotropic drugs do not appear to be held to the same standard as other medications. Whether this is because of profiteering by drug manufacturers or whether people have been so taken in by the promise of feel-good medications and insist upon having them is unclear. What *is* clear is that the safety criteria for mental-health products are not as rigorous as for those aimed at physical well-being, like antibiotics and painkillers.

Fifteen years ago, I was prescribed a painkiller called Zomax following dental surgery. It stopped the throbbing immediately; didn't make me sleepy, "spacey," or nauseous; and wasn't habit-forming. Two years later, I was under the knife again for an abscessed tooth. I expected another Zomax prescription. I was told it had been pulled from the market. The substitute medication I was given not only didn't work but made me sick. Pacing the floor with a throbbing jaw, I was furious. Why did a perfectly good drug get pulled?

One person apparently had died from it, my dentist said.

"One person?" I spat. "One person, and a drug line gets pulled?" That seemed a huge overreaction, until I thought about it. I guess that's why we have a Food and Drug Administration. Only in America would the death of one person warrant rethinking an entire product line—except in the case of psychotropic drugs.

Of course, one expects individual ("idiosyncratic") reactions to most drugs. But when the brain is the target of treatment, not only is the patient at risk of adverse reactions, so is society.

There are two schools of thought concerning the use of psychotropic drugs. One, from the mental-health industry, insists that troubled individuals who see a psychiatrist and are prescribed drugs simply evidence their need of them. The failure of the substances in question to control violent impulses is viewed not as a failure of the drugs *per se* but as a failure of society to impose mandatory early-detection programs—for example, postnatal counseling for new mothers and behavioral screening for schoolchildren—the way schools and insurance companies demand physical examinations.

An opposing view—increasingly prevalent among pediatricians, neurologists, nutritionists, and allergists—is that mood-altering drugs are insufficiently tested and so unpredictable that they can push even normal adults over the edge, not to mention troubled individuals and children. These experts complain of pressure to attribute the physical complaints of patients to mental causes whenever a diagnosis is elusive, time-consuming, or costly.

Ann Blake Tracy, author and executive director of the International Coalition for Drug Awareness, points to a new level of suicides in recent years among patients prescribed antidepressants—not your typical sleeping-pill, wrist-slitting, carbon-monoxide variety, but grisly, masochistic methods like dismemberment with a chain saw. While antidepressant drugs are not supposed to be habit-forming, getting off of them, she says, frequently results in "strange and terrible thoughts," including suicide, which last long after the drug or drug cocktail is stopped.

Depression and anger appear to be a particularly volatile mix. Both tend to be treated with antidepressants, based on the theory that chronic anger is a form of depression. But what if anger and depression are not two sides of the same coin? Suppose the worst possible thing an angry person could do is to take an antidepressant. It's certainly beginning to look that way, especially when the antidepressant is combined with a powerful antipsychotic drug such as Haldol, which was prescribed for Mrs. Yates.

Most psychotropic drugs haven't been around long enough to determine even the short-term effects, much less long-term ones, a fact that's obvious from the pharmaceutical literature on antidepressant drugs. Yet they are marketed for everything from compulsive shopping to discomfort in crowds. Children are particularly vulnerable to side effects because their brain circuitry and hormones

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are still developing. For example, if some 90 percent of adults experience sexual dysfunction while on such drugs as Prozac, Paxil, and Luvox, what about adolescents and toddlers?

Columbine killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were rumored to be either gay or uninterested in dating and sex. Since no one could confirm the conflicting rumors, they didn't get much press. But given the side effects of drugs like Prozac and Luvox, it would not be surprising to see sexual confusion fluctuating between utter disinterest and hypersexuality.

Antidepressant use, especially among children, has also been linked to the inability to enter deep sleep. Sleep deprivation is known to produce paranoia, heightened irritability (anger), and even psychotic outbreaks—one reason for its use as a method of torture.

While none of this exempts anyone from responsibility for his own conduct or that of family members who are on prescription drugs, it does, perhaps, shed light on the grotesque (and even out-of-character) nature of the rampages committed by individuals on antidepressants—especially in combination with other psychotropic substances.

Researchers are understandably anxious to be on the cutting edge of science, including medicine. But today we see the merging of social psychology—a controversial field notorious for its ambiguous advice—with hard sciences such as biology and chemistry, in an effort to alter human behavior and even personality. Everything possible is being done to institutionalize this merger—from prime-time advertising to legislation aimed at achieving parity between physical and mental-health treatments. Difficult life experiences are deemed a disease.

Before we travel too far down this road, we need to stand back, take a deep breath, and tell the officials at the FDA to take a page out of pop-psychology texts: Maybe it's time to declare a "time out" for antidepressant drugs, pending a more thorough investigation of long-term side-effects and drug interactions.

—B.K. Eakman

VLADIMIR PUTIN, at the end of February, was expected by pundits East and West to react sharply to the news of Washington's plan to send military advisors to Georgia, aiding Tbilisi in its battle with Taliban-connected Chechen insurgents. The insurgents have long used Georgia's Pankisi gorge as a rest camp and base for continuing their war for independence, which has morphed into an Islamic *jihad* against Russia.

Moscow has insisted for some time that its war in Chechnya was actually part of a struggle against "international terror" and gloated when Washington belatedly acknowledged ties among the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden, and some elements among the Chechen insurgents.

Nevertheless, the possibility of U.S. intervention in the Caucasus presented Moscow with the specter of an ever-widening U.S. presence within Russia's traditional sphere of influence: Not only does Washington appear to be weaning the Central Asian states from economic and military dependence on Moscow, the United States is poised to spread its arc of influence in the former Soviet Union from Central Asia to the Caucasus. Russian observers were reasonably taken aback, and some speculated that the United States intended to build permanent bases in the region, potentially using them as military/diplomatic tools in the ongoing dispute over dividing up the energy spoils (oil and gas) beneath the adjacent Caspian Sea. Both Afghanistan and Georgia are potential alternative pipeline routes for oil and gas shipments from former Soviet states. Thus, the soft underbelly of Russia's former empire could fall under the sway of the United States, possibly cutting Russia out of potentially lucrative oil and gas deals.

But the expected harsh response from Putin never materialized. Not only did Putin say that U.S. aid to Georgia was "no tragedy," the ex-KGB officer even maintained that, if the United States could intervene in Central Asia as part of its "war on terror," then why not in Georgia, too?

Chronicles readers are familiar with the theory that Moscow hopes to cozy up to Washington and sell some of its oil and gas to the United States as a means of raising the funds necessary to rebuild the country's collapsing infrastructure. There are other reasons, however, why Putin's Kremlin may think it has no choice but to tolerate what many Russians view as Washington's aggressive expansionism: Russian media have recently been filled with stories of the poor physical and psychological condition of the underpaid, underfed, and ill-equipped Russian army, incapable of winning the war in Chechnya, much less attacking the Taliban forces in Afghanistan or their Chechen allies in Georgia.

A wave of desertions has recently plagued the Russian military, and some units of Russia's internal troops are rumored to have mutinied when the generals considered extending their combat tours of duty in Chechnya. Meanwhile, the suicide rate among Russia's often inebriated troops is skyrocketing, and the Defense Ministry cannot find enough healthy conscripts to replenish its demoralized, sick, and alcoholic army.

So Putin's Kremlin may simply have to accept American intervention. Russia needs stability on its southern border, and she is incapable of doing the job herself. Putin may be putting the best face on a situation he can do nothing about.

—Denis Petrov

MANUFACTURING JOBS continue to disappear in the United States, and the process has accelerated during the recession that started in March 2001. Manufacturing employment declined from 18,116,000 to 17,037,000 between March and December 2001, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The popular media have reported that this recession is the mildest since World War II, yet federal data reveals a more severe contraction in manufacturing. A February 11 memo released by the National Bureau of Economic Research states that "A peak [in industrial production] occurred in June 2000 and the index declined over the next 17 months by 7.1 percent, far surpassing the average decline in the earlier recessions of 4.6 percent." BLS data shows that the percentage loss of manufacturing jobs (6.4 percent) already exceeds declines registered in the July 1990-March 1991 (3.7 percent) and July 1981-November 1982 (6.2 percent) recessions.

Manufacturing job creation peaked in April 1998. Since then, some of the biggest job losses have occurred in the industrial heartland. Michigan and Ohio, whose combined manufacturing employment is greater than any other state's, lost 123,000 jobs between April 1998 and December 2001. Another 243,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in Illinois (83,900), Pennsylvania (76,000), Indiana (44,200), and Wisconsin (39,000), while California and Texas shed a combined 149,000. From a post-1950 annualized

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average peak of 21,040,000 in 1979, manufacturing employment dropped to 17,698,000 in 2001, a 16-percent decline.

Annualized average manufacturing employment has fallen eight of the 12 years since 1990. During the 1990's, nearly 850,000 manufacturing jobs were lost. "The manufacturing group of industries was particularly sensitive to changing economic conditions, both at home and abroad," reports the *Monthly Labor Review* (December 2000). "The durable goods industries experienced the greatest losses and were slower to recover from national and global economic weaknesses," including the 1997 Asian crisis. "Employment in primary metals, which fluctuates with trade balances, sharply declined during the decade," the *Review* notes. "Blast furnaces and basic steel products was hurt in particular, and production capacity bottomed out as financial crisis spread across the globe." Among durable-goods components, the largest declines were in instruments and related products (16.5 percent), primary metals (8.3 percent), and transportation equipment (8.2 percent). Nondurable-goods employment peaked in January 1995, with large declines recorded in apparel and other textile products (35.6 percent) and in the production of the textiles themselves (22 percent).

Which sectors recorded employment gains? The service sector increased 45 percent in the 1990's, to nearly 40 million jobs. Employment in the service sector has doubled since 1979. Retail-trade jobs grew by 17 percent in the 1990's, while finance, insurance, and real-estate sector job growth was 13 percent.

Perhaps the most revealing fact to emerge from the BLS data is that combined federal, state, and local government employment grew 13.4 percent in the 1990's and exceeds manufacturing in many states. Combined government employment in Texas is 1.6 million, while 1.05 million work for manufacturers. Through December 2001, government employment was the only sector that did not decline during this recession. In June 1991, combined government employment surpassed manufacturing for the first time, and it has continued to grow as manufacturing declines. Today, government employs 21 million, an army of bureaucrats that exceeds workers who actually build products by more than four million.

—*Greg Kaza*

TEXAS A&M, founded in 1876, is one of those educational entities a certain kind of Texan recoils from praising too lavishly—the kind of Texan who went to the rival University of Texas and grew up deriding the Aggies as abrasive bumpkins.

Traditions, masticated like a chaw of first-rate 'baccy, are hard to put aside—at least until the liberals seek to join in the fun, upon which the preservation of bumpkinhood becomes an object of missionary purpose. A University of Texas graduate, that is to say, can feel the duty of speaking out against ongoing efforts to make Texas A&M over in the image of—well, who knows; maybe the University of Texas.

Every state is entitled to at least one politically incorrect (generally speaking) university. In President Bush's home state, that means A&M—the home of his father's presidential library. Thirty-five years ago, the Aggies wouldn't let in girls. Everybody belonged to the Corps of Cadets and earned a commission on graduation. Aggies, by tradition, stood throughout football games. They kissed their dates when the team scored. Seniors wore riding boots and carried sabers. They hailed primarily from farms and small towns; they brought to campus the entirely laughable (it was argued against them) values of those venues. They were squares, in short, in the eyes of the sophisticates who attended college in Austin. "Aggie jokes" (mostly derived from Polish ones) abounded in public and private discourse.

Then came modernity. To fast forward, Texas A&M is currently considering for president two affirmative-action proponents. So far as I can tell, that's *why* they are candidates—because they believe in rigging the admissions process to favor women and nonwhites. A third candidate, former CIA director Robert Gates, provides, you might say, ideological balance.

The man who was, in some sense, the likeliest possible candidate didn't make the cut. That would be Phil Gramm, who steps down from the U.S. Senate next year and reportedly had desired the university presidency. There could have been symmetry here: A&M was the launching pad for Gramm's political career. Teaching in the economics department, he attracted attention and political support through his outspoken support of free-market economics. Though Gramm attended the University of Georgia, he sold himself as an Aggie. The Aggies—conservative to the core—loved the recognition.

But you know modernity—always requiring new sacrificial victims. Gramm may be the latest. Without evincing a commitment to become the next Cal-Berkeley or University of Wisconsin, Texas A&M is moving mincingly away from its politically incorrect past. Women have gone to school there since the 60's. The Corps of Cadets today comprises a distinct minority of students. The spirit-building Aggie bonfire has been on hold for a couple of years because of safety concerns you might suppose could be resolved in a considerably shorter period of time. Politically correct faculty have tried, mostly unsuccessfully up to now, to overhaul the supposedly dated curriculum. A&M's 2020 plan—which aims at putting the school into the top tier of public universities—obviously contradicts past views of mission and purpose.

What is the anticipated loss here? Is there one? It depends. An "agricultural and mechanical" college is almost a freakish concept in higher education, conjuring up visions of students with nonmatching socks and toothpicks dangling from lower lips. A modern university clearly must be modern. But how modern, and by whose definition? There is the danger, in every human enterprise, of gaining the world and losing your soul. A federal appeals-court decision prevents taxpayer-funded universities in the Southwest from tailoring admissions standards to recruit faculty and students in accordance with skin color or sex. The presidential candidacies of two who tout their affirmative-action credentials show what is going on behind closed doors at A&M.

The apparent rejection of Gramm's candidacy may be symbolic as well as substantive. A man closely and rightly identified with ideological combat just can't, it would seem, be qualified to lead A&M into the new century. Or is it just the particular side on which Gramm has fought—the conservative side—that troubles some of the decisionmakers?

Politicians don't routinely become university presidents, though some do. (Former Oklahoma governor and senator David Boren, at the University of Oklahoma, comes to mind.) But university presidents have become exquisitely political; mostly, that identification is with the left, not the right.

Gramm—there seems no other way to view it—got dumped on as a potential

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encumbrance, in modern academia, to modern Aggie aspirations. A conservative economics department, such as the one in which Gramm served, was bad enough. But a conservative state university—horrors! No bonfire, and no Phil Gramm. Maybe UT's disdainful students were right all along: Aggies ain't quite got it together.

—*William Murchison*

ERNEST VAN DEN HAAG, R.I.P. Ernest once told me that, for most of his political life, he had been a neoconservative without knowing it. He did not mean that he necessarily admired or agreed with the godfathers of neoconservatism, but that he was a child of the Enlightenment, an enemy of credulity and superstition, whether those commodities came packaged in the form of Marxist ideology or of the Christian right. He believed in reason and science, and his nostrils quivered at the scent of irrationality. But if van den Haag was a disciple of the Enlightenment, it was the well-ordered Enlightenment of Voltaire, Gibbon, and Dr. Franklin. He saw the devil in Rousseau, but he failed to see him beneath the ironic masks of the illuminist bon-vivants he so much admired.

We met first at a conference on the Enlightenment, held about 1990 in Southern California. As I was introduced by William Rusher, Ernest did not catch my name, and he asked me if "that wild man Fleming" was really going to attend, as the program promised. I assured him that the program was correct. He asked if I knew the fellow, and when I confessed to knowing him as well as anyone in the room, he wanted to know if he was really as unpredictable as people said. In the midst of explaining that the fellow in question took orders from no one, I was interrupted by Bill Rusher: "He's putting you on, Ernest."

After this somewhat rocky start, Ernest and I found that we agreed on little except the pleasures of life: good wine, good food, pleasant places, good books. There are worse foundations for a friendship, and, over the years, though we met infrequently, we exchanged letters and telephone calls, and *Chronicles* published several of his pieces. We were always making plans for dinners in New York that never came off, which I regret.

Since I was not a reader of conservative publications at the time, I cannot estimate van den Haag's impact on young conservatives of the 1960's and 70's. Peter Brimelow, in an obituary on *Vdare.com*, recalls discovering him "in the library of an English university in the late 1960's when, charged with writing on the ghetto riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King, I found a powerful essay by van den Haag demonstrating—from observation in his own New York West Side neighborhood—that the demoralization of the authorities was actually to blame. This was exactly my own intuition. I felt a profound intellectual click, the first of many. (My tutor felt consternation.) . . .

"It was a joy and an honor to get to know van den Haag, some fifteen years and many cities later, in the Manhattan of Ronald Reagan's Decade of Greed. I would say that the salient characteristic of his mind was extreme ruthlessness. It was always a forensic thrill to see him shoot across a seminar table, with the startling speed of an angry armadillo, and grip a just-concluded lecturer, sinking unwarily into his seat to entertain the usual supportive questions, with a crushing and crippling bite.

"Van den Haag was of course an immigrant, and so not surprisingly he realized the disaster for America that the 1965 Immigration Act threatened to be. It was not van den Haag's fault that *National Review* subsequently fell into a Rip Van Winkle sleep on the subject of the evils of immigration for almost thirty years."

Ernest van den Haag exulted in debate and could not tolerate the strictures imposed on political discussion by pious liberals. But then, he liked to be honest about everything. Johnson once said that "No man is a hypocrite in his pleasures," but Johnson lived in a more honest age. Ernest was far from being a Puritan, but he was no hypocrite, and his lack of hypocrisy extended to the ordinary courtesies of life. If he said he enjoyed your company, he meant it. You could take him at his word. This is why I was disturbed when he promised that he was going to set the record straight about *Chronicles* among New York conservatives. This was the only false note in our budding friendship, since expenditure of moral capital to help a chance acquaintance is about the last thing that any New York intellectual, especially a conservative, would undertake. Much to my surprise, I began to hear rumors of Ernest's good-hearted diplomacy. He was actually saying nice things about us behind my back.

Ernest van den Haag was an honest man whom I could not help admiring. He never disclaimed (but hardly discussed) his Sephardic heritage, but even before his conversion, he never betrayed a particle of hostility toward the Christian traditions of his adopted country. Dying at the age of 88, he had lived a long life. Nearing the end, his ruthless pursuit of understanding led him away from the rationalist certainties of the Enlightenment. He died, so we are informed, in the Church and was buried after a Catholic funeral. His friends will mourn his loss.

—*Thomas Fleming*

OBITER DICTA: The editors of *Chronicles* continue to enjoy the assistance of a fine intern, **Sarah Smith**, who has helped with copyediting and corrections for several months now. Sarah is completing her bachelor's degree in English at Northern Illinois University, where she will begin master's-level work in the fall.

In **Harold O.J. Brown**'s "Two Trails of Blood" (*Views*, April), the date of the Battle of Mantzikert should have read "A.D. 1071," per Dr. Brown's instructions. The editors regret the error.

Our poet this month is **Peter Hunt**, a widely published essayist and critic who sits on the editorial board of the *Chesterton Review*. His poetry has appeared in various journals and magazines.

Our art is provided by **Earl Keleny** of Madison, Wisconsin, whose other clients have included *Barron's*, American Airlines, Simon & Schuster, the Franklin Library, *Newsweek*, and Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. An extensive portfolio of his work can be found at *www.earlkeleny.com*.

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by Thomas Fleming

A Nation of Losers

Pat Buchanan's threnody on *The Death of the West* has upset Mr. Buchanan's conservative enemies, who cannot forgive him for violating the GOP's famous 11th Commandment—not "Thou shalt not speak ill of other Republicans," but "Thou shalt not bite the hand that feeds us." No one can actually dispute Buchanan's main thesis: that European America is disappearing before our very eyes. Our people, both the old WASPs and the more recent European immigrant stock, are not reproducing, and to replace the children we are killing or not bearing, we are importing tens of millions of highly fertile immigrants, who, upon arrival, are entitled to benefits and privileges that we are denied. To finish the job, the entire educational system from preschool to graduate school has as its principal goal the elimination of the last shreds and tatters of our civilization. Whether you regard this development as a good thing or a bad thing depends on your point of view, but no honest man can deny that it is happening.

Then why all the fuss from the conservatives? If they regard the prospect of Americans vanishing from the face of the earth as something to cheer about or, at least, as nothing to lament—as most of them do—why not simply say so? But to profess such an opinion openly would be as good as to admit they are leftists, albeit capitalist leftists like Armand Hammer and Ted Turner, and that might be bad for fundraising. Or, they might say that Buchanan is right on the facts but insist that their President is hard at work solving the problems. Even the American people, however, are not so drugged and deluded that they would swallow a lie that gross. Instead, conservative pundits must pretend that things are not what they seem, trotting out their skim-milk arguments and offering them as cream.

The conservatives' weapon of choice in the war of words is the liberal platitude that, as Third World peoples begin to earn middle-class wages, they will begin to adopt middle-class values. If there were a responsible American middle class, this argument—even as wishful thinking—might have some force, but the American middle classes are living like white-trash hedonists without a particle of the self-denying discipline that characterized the Northern European bourgeoisie. Corporate executives and congressmen display about the same level of moral restraint as the gentlemen lurking outside the check-cashing store, offering to sell you some "hubba-rock."

But even if Enron executives were upholding the values of Max Weber's Protestant work ethic, it would not change the reality. Latino immigrants, as Virginia Abernethy has shown conclusively, actually have more children when they come to the United States than they would have had if they had stayed home, and by the time they get around to murdering their children at the same rate as European-Americans do, the Old America will be long gone.

The conservatives cannot admit this, because the truth would disrupt the GOP's long-range strategy for becoming the new Rainbow Coalition, disturb their foreign paymaster Rupert Murdoch, and outrage the editors of *Commentary*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New Republic*, who tell conservatives what it is safe to think. As wise as the three Chinese monkeys, as patriotic as Alger Hiss, and as brave as a lady cop busting a drunken cripple for speeding in his wheelchair, American conservatives want to wave the flag with one hand, while taking bribes from foreign interests with the other. The trouble is, the right hand *does* know what the left hand is doing. These conservative leftists do not have the excuse of a Quisling or Petain—patriotic men who misguidedly thought they could save their people by betraying their nations. For these people, there is no nation, no America that cannot be summed up in the tinny phrases of the Gettysburg Address or the driveling lyrics of the Irving Berlin tune that has displaced "The Star-Spangled Banner." The two Americas are not the reds and the blues who split over the choice between Bush and Gore. The real chasm opens between those who still prefer Francis Scott Key's dignified tribute to courage and the great masses of Americans of all races, creeds, and ideologies who get goosebumps just thinking about Sir Elton John crooning "God Bless America."

By the late 1970's, the handwriting was on the wall. I remember having dinner with Palmer Stacy back about 1981, when he was working for Sen. John East, and after talking for an hour or so about immigration, the conversation switched to other subjects. Palmer excused himself politely and explained that there was no other American subject worth discussing, because if we did not solve the immigration crisis, there would be no country left to discuss. That was over 20 years ago, and events have proved him right. There is very little recognizably American left in the United States.

If some Americans refuse to have babies and others kill them—to the applause of all right-thinking women and the men who respect their right to choose—then we clearly deserve to be taken over. Speaking personally, I like most of the immigrants—Latinos, Arabs, Thais, Eastern Europeans. They are opening up good, cheap restaurants, and they display a joy in living that is something quite distinct from the behavior of American students who think *joie de vivre* means chugging three quarts of Milwaukee's Best. My wife sometimes speculates that we ought to move to Mexico, like the rabbits in the children's story who decide to spend every night in the fox's den (while the fox is out hunting rabbits or swimming the Rio Grande). It is better to be a stranger in a strange land than in your own.

Every year, the problem of unassimilated immigrants becomes more severe, and yet there is no political will in the electorate to do anything about it. Yes, in opinion polls, a majority of Americans say they want to halt the flow of illegal immigrants, but the emergency is not so grave that they would find the time to call their congressman or refuse to vote for an open-borders candidate.

Only one Western country has displayed the slightest intention to stem the tide, and that is Italy, where President Silvio Berlusconi campaigned on a platform that included a promise to stop the flood of *clandestini* (illegal immigrants). Many smart American observers thought Berlusconi's pledge to stitch the gaping

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wound in Italian national sovereignty was only a political ploy—something like George W. Bush's pro-life stance—to be ignored after the election. But the Italians—and Berlusconi—are serious, and over the past few months something like 2,000 *clandestini* have been deported. Not content with trying to enforce existing laws, Berlusconi has proposed new legislation on immigration that virtually eliminates the principle of "family unification" (which enables a legalized immigrant to bring in his sisters and his cousins and his aunts) and includes the use of navy ships to intercept the flotillas of leaking boats weighted down to the waterline with Albanians, Tunisians, and Kurds.

If there is hope for any Western country, there is hope for Italy, which has survived wave after wave of barbarian invasions, from the Goths in the fifth century to the Lombards in the sixth; the French, Spanish, and Germans in the Renaissance; and the annual convoys of tour-busing Americans, Japanese, Brits, and Germans. The Italians have survived disunity and unification, fascism and—most recently—the rule of the renamed Communist Party; but, even in Italy, proponents of immigration restriction make exceptions for the needs of the labor market.

Italians are not having babies, either. Italy's birth and fertility rates are the second lowest in the world: Italian women are bearing, on average, 1.19 children in a lifetime, and the Italian birthrate is 9.05 per thousand of population. This is only a little lower than most of the rest of the developed world (*e.g.*, Germany, Japan, Russia, Hungary, Portugal) and in stark contrast with the more exuberant rates of Third World countries like Uganda (with a fertility rate of 2.93 and 47.52 live births per thousand), Venezuela (2.46 and 20.65), and India (3.04 and 24.28).

The Italian population question is complicated by immigration. In addition to the roughly nine live births per thousand, there are nearly two documented immigrants. This means that roughly 16 percent of Italy's gross population increase (not subtracting deaths) is the result of arriving immigrants. I think of this as the "National Suicide Quotient" (NSQ). In the United States, where women have 2.06 babies and there are 14.2 live births per thousand (these figures are substantially elevated by the high fertility of immigrants and their daughters), our numbers are increased by the arrival of 3.5 immigrants per thousand annually, which gives us an NSQ of almost 20 percent.

These numbers are probably of limited value: They all come from the CIA. They do not include a fair estimation of illegal immigrants, and there is no breakdown of live births between native-born Italian and American women and immigrants. The overall pattern, however, is not in dispute. Neither immigration *per se* nor demographic transformation is the problem, but the spineless refusal of Western nations to live life to the fullest and face the future bravely. If Americans (and Italians and Germans) will not have their own babies, someone else will do it for them. And if they insist on ruining the lives of their poorest citizens by subsidizing poverty and shiftlessness, then they will have to import aliens to mow their lawns, clean their streets, and mind their 1.19 to 2.06 babies.

Men and women are not statistical abstractions. *Which* women are having babies obviously makes a difference to us as Americans. Are they our own people or aliens who share few of our traditions? Are they able to take care of the children they bear? Some couples are capable of rearing 12 children, but there are mothers who cannot handle five or even two.

The simple fact is that white-bread Americans are not having babies because they do not know how to live, because the joy that real human beings take in the facts of life is quickly ebbing away, leaving us stranded on a beach littered with our ATVs, digital cameras, and millions of soft-porn DVDs for family hour. We watch pornography because we no longer know what sex is for; young mothers go out bar-hopping until 2:00 A.M., not knowing what is happening to their children. Our crisis is moral, not in the comparatively banal sense that we do bad things—in every age of the world, people have done bad things—but in the sense that our weak and distracted characters render us incapable of enjoying the gift of life.

There is no one pattern of life, no cultural and social system that guarantees human happiness. There are exuberant peasant cultures and exuberant aristocracies. People have sometimes lived good lives under dictatorships and, all too often, bad lives under a republican government where they had the power, at least in theory, to change things. Like individual people, cultures can turn bad. That is what has happened to us, or—to be more precise—that is what we have done to ourselves: Our beer is not just flat; it is skunked.

We could reverse the demographic revolution by a draconian system of halting immigration, repatriating noncitizens, and sterilizing people on welfare. We might even set up a national program for increasing the native-born American population. We could start by eliminating all the trouble of bearing and rearing children that seems to offend our virtuous middle class and provide them *in vitro* fertilization, surrogate mothers, bounties for adoption, and institutional "families" to take the children off their hands. Any leftist, conservative or not, could figure out the technicalities, but none of these measures would address the moral fact that, by the standards of nature's God or nature's Darwin, we are not good enough to live.

If these conclusions have a cynical ring, perhaps it is because I am recovering from a flu, and since it is Lent and I have made an absurd pledge, I cannot employ my usual method of staying well, which is to drink and party my way to good health. I call it "joy therapy," and I intend to begin it when I set foot on Italian soil exactly four days from now. (I exempted Italy from my Lenten pledges in advance.)

Good wine and good food—things that Americans buy books on, to read while they are heating up dinner in the microwave—are only a small part of human joy; but it is a symptom of something foul that, if Americans want to eat well, they have to go out or take a cooking class or watch Emeril on TV. A thing is not real if we do not pay for it. We are a nation of voyeurs and "johns," while the immigrants, at least for the time being, eat well. They may not be Christian or even religious in a traditional sense, but they do keep the feasts and bear children, even if they do not support them properly or rear them as we might like. I am not happy about losing my country, and if I could stop this process, I would. But the immigrants, though they may someday repent of their decision to come to this land of easy living (as opposed to good living), are the winners. We, on the other hand, are a nation of losers. c

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Vale Colonel H.J. Hunt

July 9th 1984

Peter Hunt

Today we bore our father to his grave.
In air as soft as whispers from the past
We carried him whose strength had lifted four
Of us, whose independence frowned and pushed
Aside a hand proffered to help across
A busy street at seventy-six; so glad
I did not see his face so paper-thin
His eagle-glance subdued to childhood need
At eighty-four. Recovered briefly, he
Had uttered thoughts that trembled through the mist
That made the present into past, and with
The migrant urge or summoning of gypsy-blood
That drove him south those years ago, he said:
"Let's head North," as though their time stood still,
And restless joy of wandering with her
Ever dwelt in splendid realms of light
That saw no dusk or age, but kept the childhood
Ecstasy alive in each unfolding scene.

Some Celtic blood or discontented youth
Had mingled with his English call to arms
And drove him into battlefields a boy
Had dimly seen; his early star of Mountie
Lore eclipsed by European war
That drank its blood and mixed its mud with death
And dysentery. And so a veteran
At seventeen, scarce out of Cameron Highland
Uniform, he ran into a sergeant
Running too, who knocked him down and with a laugh
Helped him to his feet, and in a trice
Had him frontier-bound, and Kipling-carved.
How those Indian days burnt through the years,
Days of rabid dogs and trains, and raids
Of Afghan tribes among the sullen hills.

His songs and stories, anecdotes remain,
The wartime novel left unpublished,
And tales of North-West Mounted Police,
Bandolero, Cornish Floral dance, Katmandu,
Some poems, pictures too, mere fragments of
The life within. Gone are the gesture and the voice
That told of Queensland crimson, blue and palm-tree
Green, and made the oleander glow in dreams.
A man who rode a horse and aimed a rifle
True as vows that bound him through the
Diamond years and blessed him to the end.

Edwardian man, driven across the world,
Your London days enshrouded by the lure
And doom of war, your father's wandering son,
You left your home, its scriptured, Baptist zeal
And older yeoman images of Somerset
To find yourself, and found a Faith that sang
Its truth until the last in harmony
With her whose Antrim cross in curfew days
Had sent upon a voyage that brought you home.

It's hard to take it in, that you have reached
Your journey's end; a new life just begun
Where endless light restores the youth that fades,
And joys of ancient wedding-bells are notes
That bring the music of your love into
Eternal realms that vibrate with a life
That never ends: your Father's house at last.
No brooding there, no loss of light, or age
Or shattered strength, but only grace and peace.

I still can hear the voice that boomed across
Parade-grounds; see the smile that was a prelude
To a yarn; recall the rising laugh and wait
To hear the joke, feel the joy of life
Still smitten with the stars of dreaming youth;
Regret so little said in years apart,
Except confounded politics, even
In those meetings rare and brief, always
Wishing closer sonship felt at last

In Brisbane light the choir sang, "Amazing Grace"
As we farewelled your artist's-soldier's soul
And nerved the arms that bore you to your rest.

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by Roger D. McGrath

In Remembrance of My Brothers

Three New York firefighters raise Old Glory over the rubble of the World Trade Center. The dramatic moment is captured from afar by a photographer. Within a day or two, the photo is featured in newspapers across the United States. It becomes as recognizable as the Marine flag-raising on Mt. Suribachi. T-shirts soon appear with the two images juxtaposed. A New York real-estate developer commissions an artist to replicate the event in a monument to be erected on the grounds of the New York fire-department headquarters. All are ecstatic.

Then we are told that the actual event will not replicated, that there is a problem with the flag-raising: The three firefighters are white. Thus, for the statue, one of the whites will be transformed into a black and another into a Latino. The news of the change spreads like wildfire and becomes a topic for radio talk shows. A fireman initiates a protest and petition drive that mobilizes thousands in New York and beyond. For the time being, the erection of the monument is suspended.

This episode reveals all too much about life in America at the beginning of the 21st century: False symbols are replacing reality, and history be damned, as long as we are talking about whites and Western civilization. Usually, whites roll over and play dead for fear of being called "racists." This case was different, though, and I suspect that is because of the strong Irish identity of many of the firemen. Of the 10,000 firefighters in the New York Fire Department, more than 4,000 are Irish. Two of the three firemen who raised the flag are Irish. Of the 343 firefighters who died on September 11, 150 (or 44 percent) were Irish. The scroll of those who died reads like a clan map of Ireland: Barry, Boyle, Brennan, and Byrne; Devlin, Donnelly, Downey, and Duffy; Fanning, Farrelly, Feehan, and Foley; Garvey, Geraghty, Giberson, and Ginley; Halloran, Healey, Hickey, and Holohan; Keating, Kelly, Kennedy, and Kerwin; McAvoy, McHugh, McMahon, and McSweeney; Maloney, Mullen, Mulligan, and Murphy; O'Callaghan, O'Hagan, O'Keefe, and O'Rourke; Regan, Reilly, Rogan, and Ryan; and a hundred more from Ahearn to Whelan.

It is not an accident, then, that the firefighter who initiated the protest against the politically correct but historically perverted statue is Stephen Cassidy. Nor is it a coincidence that the fire captain at Engine Co. 236 in Brooklyn who supported Cassidy's efforts is Kevin McCabe. Cassidy told me, "I was shocked that the statue would not accurately reflect the real event. A world-famous photograph which captured a great, patriot moment is somehow lacking. Nearly all my fellow firefighters are angry, and many are outraged." John Finucane, a retired lieutenant from Engine Co. 85, Lad. 59 in the South Bronx and the political-education coordinator for the Emerald Society, is one of those outraged. "This is like the English version of Irish history," Finucane told me. "American children will see a lie. The children and grandchildren of firefighters will see a false image." He emphasized that firefighters themselves, the men in the ranks, have to take action because the politicians at the top have self-serving agendas and lack the courage to confront political correctness.

There is now talk about a generic monument depicting firefighters of all races picking through the rubble of the WTC. That would certainly be dramatic! For the record, only 12 (or three percent) of the firemen who died on September 11 were black, and only another 12, Latino. Will the generic statue represent 94 percent of the men as white, or will it have a politically correct but grossly misrepresentative 33.3 percent? I don't think generic whites will have much to say about this, but the firefighters might, especially Irish firemen who are unwilling to acquiesce to the false reality of the New Order. John Finucane has sent a letter on behalf of the Emerald Society to the committee responsible for the proposed monument requesting that the Emeralds be included in the decision-making process. That only seems fair, since nearly half of those firefighters who died on September 11 were members of the society. The English are fond of saying that the Irish remember too much history. "The Ballad of Mike Moran" suggests that they do, at least, remember.

The rousing and poignant song, written by Doug Cogan and Chris Storc, was inspired by firefighter Mike Moran, who paid tribute to his fallen brother, Battalion Chief John Moran, at a fundraising event and ended his remarks with a special salutation to Osama bin Laden.

I am Irish and was proud to serve
with other firemen,
Who gave their lives for us that day,
each one of them a friend,
In remembrance of my brothers
who from earthly bonds did pass,
Osama, step right up and kiss my
royal Irish ass.

They're the bravest men I've known
and I'll miss them every day,
I will keep them in my heart, so
they're never far away. . . .

Ah, those Paddies remember too much. Let's hope that all Americans remember too much and that they do not allow their history to be distorted and misrepresented for the sake of political correctness. The Soviet Union manufactured history to serve its contemporary political and social agendas. To a lesser degree, we have begun to go down that same twisted road. It would be a delicious twist if it were New York firefighters—and others like them—who put us on the right road once again. c

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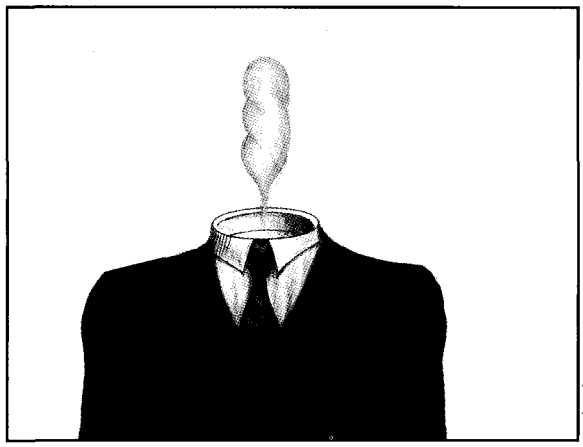
The Timorous Intellectuals

How the West Was Lost

by Joseph Sobran



Earl Kelemy

David Brock, scourge of Anita Hill and Bill Clinton, the young man who gave new meaning and currency to the phrase "Arkansas state trooper," has made a second career of repenting of his years in the conservative movement. He has now retold the story of his disaffection from the movement in *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (Crown Publishing Group). Liberals are glad to publicize his account, but it would be stretching a point to say that they admire him. He has not undergone a genuine conversion, since he had no discernible principles to begin with; he is essentially just a gossip who has switched sides. He naturally describes his change of sides as a change of heart, a seizure of conscience.

Brock has even apologized to Clinton for delving into his private life, though it is hard to see why he should. After all, he revealed what nobody doubts: that as governor of Arkansas, Clinton used those troopers to procure girls and stand sentry over his amours, a clear abuse of office that foreshadowed events that occurred after Brock's famous article appeared in the *American Spectator*. It was, in fact, the scoop of the decade. Brock's remorse seems more opportunistic than the supposed offense.

Still, Brock's early successes in sexual muckraking illustrate something important about the conservative movement: its descent into triviality. Granted, Clinton was an irresistible target. Before him, the American presidency was the world's second-most asexual office, right behind the archbishopric of Canterbury. Even now, it is hard to remember how recently this was true, how hilariously shocking it was to see a U.S. president's horniness mercilessly mocked by Jay Leno, Conan O'Brien, and *Saturday Night Live*. Yes, we had learned of Jack Kennedy's White House couplings, but that was posthumous. While they ruled, Jack and Jackie at least maintained an aura, however bogus, of class. Clinton was Dogpatch's answer to Camelot.

Great fun. But . . . well, is this what conservatism is all about? Setting the vice squad on Bill Clinton? What about Burke, Calhoun, Oakeshott? If these giants of the earth were still with us, would they have devoted their waking hours to exposing the nocturnal adventures of Slick Willie?

But enough about David Brock; let's talk about me. Not because I am in any way exemplary, but, on the contrary, because I was, I think, very typical of my generation of conservatives. Like Brock, I consider myself an ex-conservative, or at least an ex-movement conservative, and I too possess a conscience, even though it is not necessarily the predominant element in my makeup. (When I have wrestled with my conscience, I have usually won in straight falls.)

My own story begins in 1965, which I began as a college freshman and a passive, tepid liberal. Lyndon Johnson had just crushed Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election, and it seemed that the American people had decisively chosen liberalism over conservatism once and for all. As Bill Buckley wryly put it, History had spoken.

I had barely heard of Buckley then, but that was soon to change—and how! Early in the year, I started dating a good-looking girl with a stack of back issues of *National Review* and the complete works of Ayn Rand; by June, I was reading Buckley, Rand, Russell Kirk, Henry Hazlitt, and Frederic Bastiat, who altered my whole *Weltanschauung*—an imposing word in 1965—with a single sentence. Soon, I was also reading Whittaker Chambers, Richard Weaver, James Burnham, Willmoore Kendall, and other formative conservative thinkers. Bracing

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stuff, but, except for Kendall, hardly cheerful.

In 1965, the young conservative movement refused to admit that it was whipped. Its morale was high, in spite of its political fortunes. Buckley adopted an attitude of aesthetic contempt for liberalism—his *Up From Liberalism* became my Bible—and Rand, though stylistically crude and insistently anticonservative, dealt liberalism some decisive body-blows. I had also fallen in love with *Coriolanus*, and anyone who sneered at democracy and majority rule, as both Buckley and Rand did, was right up my alley. I decided I would much rather lose with these people than win with those vulgar avatars of progress, Bobby Kennedy and John Lindsay, the pseudo-Kennedy whom Buckley was hilariously deflating in the 1965 New York mayoral election.

Buckley lost badly, but carried the aesthete vote by a landslide. The liberal press hinted that he was a Nazi—a Fischetti cartoon subtly gave him a toothbrush mustache—but one perceptive pundit likened him to the defiant aristocrat Coriolanus. He had the last word on the campaign in his brilliant book *The Unmaking of a Mayor*.

For my generation, Buckley *was* conservatism, the living avatar of Burke, Dr. Johnson, Chesterton, Evelyn Waugh, and Oakeshott. I adored him. I daydreamed of meeting him and exchanging thoughts. Little did I know I would work for him for 21 years—until he fired me. Hired and fired by Bill Buckley! My career in a nutshell. And thereby hangs a tale.

If I may say so, dear reader, the proverbial bell does not just toll for Joe Sobran. It also tolls for thee.

In 1965, liberalism appeared politically triumphant. By 1966, it was near collapse. Republicans made sudden gains in the fall elections, most notably Ronald Reagan's million-vote victory over Pat Brown in California's gubernatorial election.

In 1968, Buckley supported Richard Nixon for president. Nixon was no conservative, but he was at least less liberal than Hubert Humphrey, and he could win. In fact, Nixon beat Humphrey by a hair, both getting a mere 43 percent of the popular vote, but with George Wallace's 13 percent, Lyndon Johnson's 1964 landslide had been virtually reversed. Nixon became the conservative white hope.

When I joined the staff of *National Review* in September 1972, Nixon was about to wallop the pinko George McGovern, and it seemed imperative to root for him. Of course, he had been a severe disappointment to conservatives, funding instead of cutting the burgeoning Great Society programs, cozying up to Leonid Brezhnev and Mao Tse-tung (as we then spelled it), and imposing wage-and-price controls. Two of Nixon's Supreme Court appointees also voted to impose legal abortion on all 50 states. But we thought he was our only hope, and we dutifully tried to belittle the growing evidence of his role in the Watergate caper (as we then called it).

The Ford and Carter years were equally dreary. We became so used to laboring in a lost cause that Ronald Reagan's 1980 victory seemed like a miracle. At last, the Silent Majority had spoken! It had come to its senses and repudiated liberalism. For good measure, the Republicans also won a majority in the U.S. Senate. Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive!

Reagan was a *National Review* subscriber and a close friend of Bill Buckley—"one of us," as we then said. If we had backed Nixon out of necessity, we supported Reagan with no reservations at all. If his dog had mauled a child, we might not have defended the dog, but we would have taken the editorial position that children can be intolerably vexing to animals.

I was—I blush to say it, but the story would be incomplete if I suppressed it—naive enough to believe that Reagan's victory marked the beginning of the end for liberalism. I think other conservatives believed so too, except for a few cranky skeptics who had an annoying way of keeping score on Reagan's actual record. Suddenly, the prescribed tone for conservatives was optimism; happy days were here again! The aloof pessimism of the original movement was forgotten.

But by Reagan's second term, it became obvious even to me that the "Reagan Revolution"—supposedly the conservative equivalent of the New Deal—was a dud, if not a fraud. The federal government had continued to expand; Reagan had dodged fights with the Democrats on abortion, racial quotas, welfare programs, and other key issues where basic conservative principles were at stake. Yet we—we conservatives, that is, not just we *National Review* editors—remained unalterably convinced that Reagan was "one of us" and deserved our support. We pretended not to notice his actual pattern of acquiescing to liberal hegemony.

> Many conservatives still look back on the Reagan era as a golden age, instead of what it was: the moment of a profound conservative failure of nerve.

We also pretended not to notice a new development: the deformation of the conservative movement by its new allies, the "neoconservatives." These were largely Jewish intellectual refugees from liberalism, Zionists who shared our anticommunism but were indifferent to the traditional long-term conservative domestic agenda of repealing legal abortion and the welfare state. They chiefly wanted a more assertive, even aggressive, foreign policy, especially in the Middle East. Most conservatives welcomed them to the movement without foreseeing the consequences.

Throughout the 1980's, Beltway conservatives kept holding victory parties and assuring themselves that "we" had won. But all this crowing was a way of disguising a huge and horrible fact: The only conservative victories had been superficial and symbolic. Nothing in Washington, or in the country as a whole, had really changed.

In fairness to Reagan, no president could have done what conservatives hoped he would do. The real problem was a centralization of power that had begun with Abraham Lincoln, accelerated under Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, and become a settled habit under Lyndon Johnson and Nixon. Reagan had the realism to come to terms with what he could not change, while persuading his quixotic supporters that he shared their dreams.

Reagan was a political genius—that is, a brilliant actor. True, his range was limited (we are not talking Olivier here), but within that range, he was convincing. He had friend and

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foe alike passionately certain that he was dismantling the whole liberal legacy, slashing welfare spending, and earnestly fighting legal abortion. Many conservatives still believe all this and look back on the Reagan era as a golden age, instead of what it was: the moment of a profound conservative failure of nerve.

Reagan, a charming man, showed that it can be more useful to fool your friends than your enemies. To this day, Pat Buchanan, Peggy Noonan, and Rush Limbaugh alike invoke him as a model of conservatism (though Pat knows better). The truth is that, under Reagan, conservatism defined itself downward. It quietly abandoned its residual hope of a return to a free-market economy, a Christian culture, and limited, constitutional government. Instead, it settled for militarism and Republican partisanship.

This became evident when the Cold War ended. By 1989, communism, Soviet or Chinese, posed no serious threat to the West. The enormous U.S. military machine was no longer necessary for what the Constitution quaintly calls "the common defense of the United States." It should have been reduced accordingly. But conservatives had frozen themselves into habits of belligerency, and they eagerly supported the first President Bush's war on Manuel Noriega. Then, just as eagerly, they backed his war on Iraq. But Bush, like Nixon, was a disappointment, especially coming on the heels of Reagan.

In their abandonment of principle, conservatives needed a cause to sustain them. They found one in Bill Clinton, a Democrat they insisted on seeing as a liberal despite a nature so unprincipled that most real liberals distrusted him. Destroying Clinton, one way or another, became the new conservative obsession. But on what pretext? He was no Roosevelt or Johnson. But he was rumored to be a flagrant adulterer.

Enter David Brock.

The fury with which "movement" conservatives pursued Clinton and his wife proved only that they could find nothing better to do with their time. With Limbaugh's daily diatribes setting the tone, they talked as if dethroning the Clintons would by itself restore the Republic to health. They ignored the political and cultural decay that had steadily progressed during several Republican administrations, including Reagan's.

Against this background, in which "conservatism" was concerned with personalities rather than principles, Brock found his niche. Not that liberalism was much more principled: The confirmation brawls over Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas descended into arguments over whether they had rented videos of which the Christian Right would disapprove. But "movement" conservatives snatched at the bait.

In the ensuing donnybrook, Brock was outed—by the liberal Frank Rich of the *New York Times*!—as a homosexual, while conservatives retorted that this was irrelevant. By then, the battle lines were getting pretty confused. Bottles and brickbats were flying, and anyone might be conked unconscious at any moment. Brock woke up to find himself on the liberal Democrat side. Nobody is quite sure why. Brock himself ascribes it to his conscience—always the safest explanation for the otherwise inexplicable.

The 1994 off-year elections produced the "Republican Revolution," led by Newt Gingrich, as the GOP carried both houses of Congress. Touting their new agenda, the (largely unconstitutional, if anyone cared) "Contract with America," the Republicans were once more sure that their day had come at last. While professing to agree that "the era of Big Government is over," Clinton ate them alive. Then, fast-talking his way through a campaign-finance scandal, he whipped poor Bob Dole to win reelection in 1996.

Any thought of a return to conservative principle was abandoned with the emergence of Monica Lewinsky. Here was a killer scandal that rendered superfluous any pedantic appeal to the *Federalist*! Surely, no sitting president could survive the revelation that he had played around with an intern right in the Oval Office—then brazenly lied to the public about it. Add a charge of perjury, and you had a clear case of "high crimes and misdemeanors." Out of the mothballs, for the nonce, came the U.S. Constitution.

It did not do any good. Clinton lacked Reagan's warm appeal, but he had his own low political genius for improvisation and could get himself out of any tight spot, including an impeachment. He played Bugs Bunny to the Republicans' Elmer Fudd, until he finally left office in a climactic blaze of scandal.

Meanwhile, the conservatives in 2000 cast their lot with the latest George Bush, the "compassionate conservative." They backed him in the Republican primaries, the November election, and the subsequent Great Chad Debate. Conservatism had moved from the Permanent Things to the contention that, in every quotidian dispute, the Republicans are right.

On September 11, 2001, the movement got a sudden boost, suited to its new *ad hoc* character. The terrorist attacks afforded a welcome new occasion for war and for the sort of tough talk that has come to pass for conservatism. Dropping everything, the young editors of *National Review* and the *Weekly Standard*, boasting among them a combined military experience of zero, vied with one another in calling for total war, chiefly against the enemies of Israel.

All these bellicose roars were as hollow as they were strident. They only underscored the truth: that conservatives have nothing left to conserve. The youngsters who now serve as spokesmen for the movement have no sense of history, no forebodings of tragedy, and very little awareness of the tradition of American conservatism itself. The pessimism of men like Chambers, Weaver, and Burnham is lost on them. Most of them have never heard of Albert Jay Nock, Garet Garrett, John Flynn, Frank Chodorov, and other exemplars of the Old Right.

Pat Buchanan, excommunicated from the movement by the neocons, is among the few to see how serious the condition of the country really is. His latest book, *The Death of the West*, presents stark evidence that what is left of Christendom—which is what conservatism started out, long ago, to conserve—is doomed, not by terrorism but by demographics.

This thesis runs directly counter to today's prescribed optimism. Reviewing the book in *National Review*, senior editor Richard Brookhiser sneered that Buchanan is a "timorous intellectual." An equally petty review appeared in the *Weekly Standard*. Whether the West is dying does not seem to matter; the important thing is to put Buchanan down.

"Timorous intellectuals" abound in what is left of the conservative movement, but they emphatically do not include Buchanan. He stands almost alone as a public figure willing to face the "cultural and religious war" that is destroying what is left of Christendom.

As for what is left of the American conservative movement, it has quietly abandoned so much of its heritage—religious, constitutional, literary, and economic—that it is now no more than a variant of the liberalism it pretends to oppose. c

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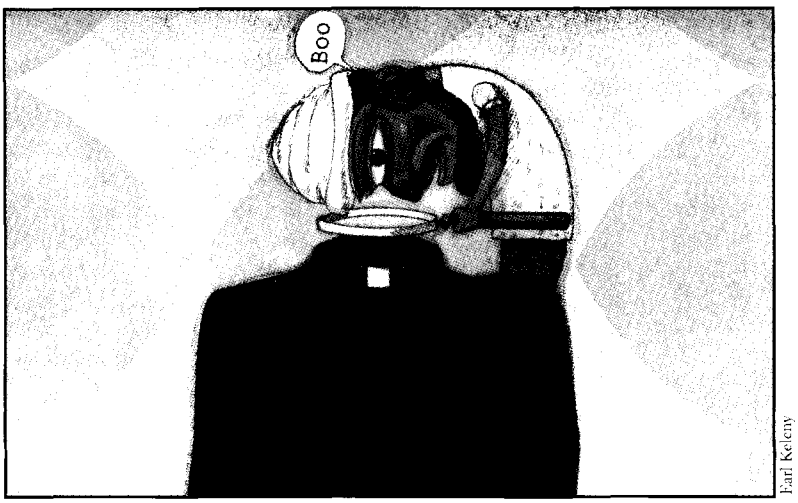
Little Pink Churches for You and Me

Ain't That America

by Aaron D. Wolf



Earl Kelcny

For pietist Lutheran pastors in America, it was an embarrassment that would not go away. Since the Reformation, it had always been one of the people's favorite hymns, penned by Martin Luther himself—second only to "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Written in 1541, "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word" had been an anthem—sometimes even a battle cry—during the Thirty Years War. But the pietists' goal—to transform Lutheranism from what they perceived to be the victim of "dead orthodoxy" to a religion of inner feelings, more in line with American evangelicalism—would be thwarted if the common folks in the pews sang militant songs rooted in the past.

Fortunately, in the late 19th century, British proto-feminist Catherine Winkworth set about the task of translating the old Lutheran standards into tamer English versions. By doing away with the German *and* toning down the words, Winkworth ensured that generations to come would forget both the culture and theology that had shaped their identity as Lutherans.

Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word
Curb those who feign by craft and sword
To wrest the Kingdom from Thy Son
And set at naught all He hath done.

When Luther wrote "*Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort*," he had not been vague about those who "feign by craft and sword." He had named names.

Lord, preserve us steadfast in Thy Word
From the murder of the pope and the Turk
Who from Christ Jesus, Thine only Son
Would wrest from Him His glorious Throne.

In Luther's assessment, the Turk was the physical enemy of Christendom, and the pope, its spiritual foe. Both embodied the spirit of Antichrist: one, by setting himself up in the Temple and proclaiming himself to be Christ's vicar; the other, by assaulting the people and places of Christendom. Likewise, in the eyes of the Catholic Church (according to Pope Leo X's bull *Exsurge Domine*), Luther was the "wild boar" from the Black Forest, running amok in the vineyard of the Lord, worthy of excommunication, if not death.

For today's churchgoers who live in John Mellencamp's "little pink houses," every stanza of Western Christianity—Lutheran, Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist—has been translated into a tame English version. Even words like "craft" and "sword" seem out of place among "conservative" Lutherans of the Missouri Synod, where the only real enemy seems to be irrelevant language—words like "the murder of the pope and the Turk." Parishioners are confused by such references, especially since they have no idea why Luther might have considered the pope to be a spiritual murderer, and even now, in the face of terrorist attacks from the world's great "religion of peace," "Turkish murder" sounds like what you might do on the night before Thanksgiving.

American churches have lost their nerve at a time when people seem to be flocking to them *en masse*, looking for solace,

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meaning, and leadership in the face of impending crisis. What do they find? More often than not, they will be subjected to a glut of feel-good praise choruses, guitars and drums, and pithy sermons on anything but the appointed text for the day—not to mention such Christian symbols as "God Bless America" and prayers that amount to: "Lord, keep us steadfast while the U.S. military bombs Afghanistan back into the stone age." What they will not find (in most cases) is the hope of the Gospel offered through Word and Sacrament. Nor, by and large, will they learn about the *significance* of Christ's Incarnation (a point of particular importance in the face of Islam), Christ's Cross (which brings up the nasty subject of what put Him there), His Resurrection (the basis of all Christian hope), or His Ascension (which points to His present reign and His future return as Judge of the quick and the dead).

Why not? After all, these are not complex points of esoteric dogma: They make up what C.S. Lewis calls "mere Christianity"—that which is common to all Christian denominations. There is, to be sure, a core of truth that we can call "mere Christianity." However, as the Oxford don points out, there is no such thing as a "mere Christian." Human beings are complex creations of God, made up of one or several ethnic backgrounds, racial traits, regional and local identities.

Furthermore, there is no such thing as a "mere Christian church," devoid of a history of theological conflict over fine points of doctrine and existing apart from a real community of people who share familial and ethnic ties and tradition. "Mere Christianity" exists in the foggy realm of ideas; real people must encounter mere Christianity in real churches that preserve real, historic traditions. Attempts to create mere Christian churches—such as the many evangelical or "nondenominational" sects—eventually default into one of the convoluted traditions that are mostly Anabaptist or Pentecostal. Bereft of any coherent heritage, these groups experience high turnover and quickly degenerate into dog-and-pony shows.

These nondenominational, big pink churches now surround our American cities, slapped up overnight next to the Wal-Marts and mini- and maxi-malls. But just as quickly, our traditional churches within our crumbling cities are being spray-painted and converted into little pink churches for you and me. It is nearly impossible to find Lutheran churches, for example, that even stick to the new hymnal, with its tame liturgy—let alone the old one full of "archaisms." Try to find a Catholic church where there is no guitar mass, let alone a parish that celebrates the *Tridentine* one. Good luck locating a Presbyterian church where you will hear from the Westminster Confession instead of from a Ned Flanders clone who bears the title of "Drama Team Pastor."

Experts offer any number of explanations as to why American churches have lost their nerve, all of which contain a nugget of truth. Some Protestants blame Romanizing tendencies in the churches, some Catholics blame Protestant individualism; some lament a loss of transcendence, others, a loss of immanence. Some see latent gnosticism, the New Age movement, secular humanism, modernism, or postmodernism at the source of the problem. Jack Van Impe blames the European Union. But at the root of all these tendencies is a common factor: American churches are beginning to look much the same, the result of a simultaneous and collective loss of identity.

Lutherans, Catholics, Presbyterians, Episcopalians—clergy and laity—have capitulated to the great homogenizing force that is America. Every aspect of their lives (theological confessions, not to mention ethnicity, culture, place), they have let erode into the American sea. Once this erosion occurs, "mere Christianity"—that deposit of faith that is guarded at the core—is free to float away, as well.

With this loss of identity comes a loss of nerve, precisely because nerve is a function of identity. Bold defiance of an enemy can only come from someone who clearly understands who his enemy is. In order to know who your enemy is, you must know yourself. That means discovering and engaging your own tradition, which is precisely the opposite of the impulse of every major Christian denomination in America.

Recent examples abound. In the immediate aftermath of the World Trade Center bombing on September 11, a nationally televised "prayer service" bore witness to the deracination and related lack of nerve of American churches. The Reverend Oprah Winfrey presided over the solemn event, during which, according to the AP,

> representatives of New York's broad spectrum of faiths took the field of Yankee Stadium . . . "We need faith, wisdom and strength of soul," said New York's Roman Catholic archbishop.
>
> The service—billed as "A Prayer for America"—mixed solemn words with patriotic and inspirational songs, culminating in Lee Greenwood's rendition of "God Bless the USA." The crowd waved their flags, sang along and shouted "USA! USA" at its close.
>
> Still, said the Rev. David Benke, president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Atlantic District, it was a day when "the field of dreams turned into God's house of prayer."

Despite the presence of the Reverend Benke, no one was singing "preserve us from the murder of the Turk." After all, as the AP reported, the event progressed as "one after another, members of the clergy—Jews, Roman Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, Protestants, Sikhs, Greek Orthodox—stepped up to offer prayers." Where was the Reverend Benke's nerve when "the crowd also rose to its feet when Imam Izak-El M. Pasha pleaded, 'Do not allow the ignorance of people to have you attack your good neighbors. We are Muslims, but we are Americans'"?

Of course, if a Lutheran pastor fails to understand why he should not participate in a joint prayer service with a Roman Catholic bishop, we should not be surprised when he offers prayers alongside an Islamic Imam. Ain't that America?

In recent years, Missouri-Synod Lutherans have regarded Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, as our conservative seminary. One of the featured speakers for the seminary's theological symposium, held in January, was Fr. Richard John Neuhaus. Neuhaus is, among other things, a former Missouri Synod pastor who betrayed his vows and defected, first, to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and, then, to the Roman Catholic Church. After achieving fame for doing so, he has spearheaded such ecumenist ventures as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," a meeting of American evangelical and Catholic celebrities that in 1997, produced a document called "The Gift of Salvation." The signatories concluded that

> As Evangelicals who thank God for the heritage of the

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> Reformation and affirm with conviction its classic confessions, as Catholics who are conscientiously faithful to the teaching of the Catholic Church, and as disciples together of the Lord Jesus Christ who recognize our debt to our Christian forebears and our obligations to our contemporaries and those who will come after us, we affirm our unity in the Gospel that we have here professed.

Had the evangelicals decided that justification was no longer by faith alone? That it was now, as Catholics confess, by "faith working in love"? Or had the Catholics capitulated, having been persuaded that baptized believers are, as Luther taught, *simul justus et peccator*? No: The signatories merely agreed on slippery, vague language that could be read differently by both groups.

> In justification we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, through whom the love of God is poured forth into our hearts (Romans 5:5). The grace of Christ and the gift of the Spirit received through faith (Galatians 3:14) are experienced and expressed in diverse ways by different Christians and in different Christian traditions . . .

Evangelicals and Catholics, it would seem, are no longer in disagreement on the most fundamental aspects of salvation, but instead, simply espouse different (but equally true) versions of the "fullness of God's saving truth." Thus, there is no longer any need for either group to proselytize the other, since "We must not allow our witness as Christians to be compromised by . . . needlessly divisive disputes."

Of course, a few minor differences still remain.

> Among such questions are these: the meaning of baptismal regeneration, the Eucharist, and sacramental grace; the historic uses of the language of justification as it relates to imputed and transformative righteousness; the normative status of justification in relation to all Christian doctrine; the assertion that while justification is by faith alone, the faith that receives salvation is never alone; diverse understandings of merit, reward, purgatory, and indulgences; Marian devotion and the assistance of the saints in the life of salvation; and the possibility of salvation for those who have not been evangelized.

I polled several hundred Lutheran laymen and pastors, asking "Why in the world would Ft. Wayne invite Neuhaus . . . to deliver what is being dubbed 'A Pilgrim's Report'—and in front of a bunch of seminary students?" I received a lone reply from a conservative Lutheran pastor who had left the Missouri Synod precisely because of what he perceived to be a loss of identity. He said, simply, "respectability." "That's why Neuhaus left Missouri in the first place. And now that he's a celebrity, that's why Missouri wants him back—even if just for an evening: They want respectability, too."

Lutherans and Catholics especially have been working overtime to white-out the nasty parts of their respective traditions—the Augsburg Confession and the Council of Trent—that anathematize each other. In 1999—on October 31, no less—members of the Lutheran World Federation and Pope John Paul II's council on Lutheran-Catholic dialogue signed the "Joint Declaration on Justification," which, according to Neuhaus' *First Things* magazine, stated that the historic conflicts between Lutheran and Catholic soteriology amount to "two [different] languages of salvation." As Fr. Avery Dulles wrote in the December 1999 issue of *First Things*:

> What seems to be surfacing is a willingness to acknowledge that we have here two systems that have to be taken holistically. Both take their departure from the Scriptures, the creeds, and early tradition. But they filter the data through different thought-forms, or languages.
>
> The Catholic thought-form, as expressed at Trent, is Scholastic, and heavily indebted to Greek metaphysics. The Lutheran thought-form is more existential, personalistic, or, as some prefer to say, relational. The Scholastics adopt a contemplative point of view, seeking explanation. Luther and his followers, adopting a confessional posture, seek to address God and give an account of themselves before God. In that framework all the terms take on a different hue. For a Lutheran to say that we are merely passive in receiving justification, that we are justified by faith alone, that justification is an imputation of the righteousness of Christ, that the justified continue to be sinners, that concupiscence is sin, that God's law accuses us of our guilt, and that eternal life is never merited—all these statements are possible and necessary in the Lutheran system. These statements find strong resonances in the Catholic literature of proclamation and spirituality.

He concluded by saying that

> In view of [our] shared heritage of faith, we are confident that our doctrinal formulations, currently expressed in different idioms, can in the end be reconciled. Our readiness to declare the nonapplicability of the sixteenth-century condemnations on justification is based on this conviction.

There will be no passion for the truth—no nerve—in the hearts of Christians in American churches, unless Lutherans, Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, etc., rediscover their own identities. Until that happens, joint campaigns of resistance against common enemies such as militant Islam will also lack nerve, and probably will not even be mounted. That goes for efforts to restore the civilization of Christendom as well.

The best we can do is tell the truth and encourage real people to resist homogenization. But there can be no such thing as an "identity movement" that transcends unique people and places. We cannot simply write or speak about the loss of nerve and thereby transform the homogeneous "American church" back into something that has depth and guts. Reinvigorating the nerve of American churches by rediscovering identity requires real work, in the home and in the parish, before it can affect a denomination. It requires fathers to catechize their children, parishioners to resist whenever they hear "God Bless America" in church or see the inevitable announcement in the bulletin that the church is planning to add a little pink rock 'n' roll worship service, and pastors to express outrage whenever their superiors sign off on obfuscative, ecumenist documents. For Lutherans, it may mean retranslating Luther's old hymn or learning the German version. Each of us must sacrifice the dream of "respectability" for which so many "conservative" leaders lust. As our Lord said, "They have their reward" (Matthew 6:2). c

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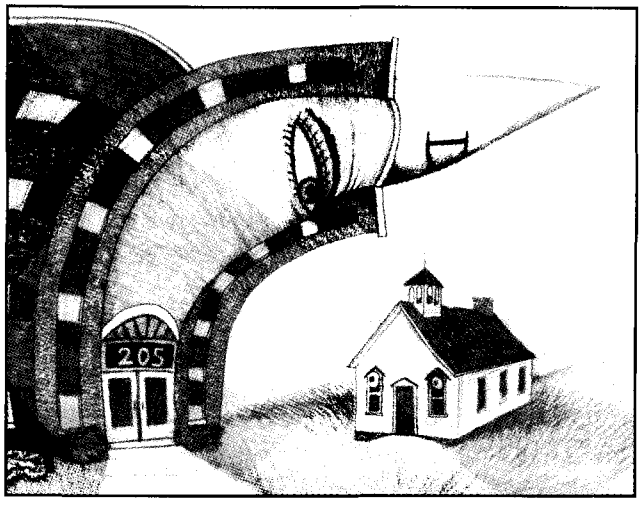
"Think of the Children!"

The Failure of Public Education

by Scott P. Richert



H. Ward Sterett

"School cuts would hurt neediest kids," the headline in the local Gannett paper proclaimed. With the spring primary just days away, the administration of Rockford School District 205 was urging the public to pass the third education referendum in a row. This one would allow the district to issue $23.5 million in bonds and use the revenue to pay back tax protesters who had successfully fought judicial taxation during the district's 12-year school-desegregation lawsuit. Despite the unusual circumstances, however, the rhetoric was the same as that used in referenda battles across the country: "Think of the children!"

The district administration claimed that drastic cuts would need to be made if the referendum failed: no more sports, computers, drama, band, and no more tutors for children who needed extra help. All of the major cuts had one thing in common: They would eliminate programs that bring children to school early and keep them there until late in the day. In other words, these programs allow mothers to work without having to shell out extra money for daycare, and they keep young children off of the street.

The administration played its cards well: On March 19, the referendum passed by approximately 500 votes, out of 34,000 cast. Though District 205 already spends almost $10,000 per student, local voters had shown their willingness to provide a quality education to the 27,000 children enrolled in District 205—or so the district administration declared. A new, brighter day in Rockford public education had begun.

"During the summer of 1837, in a log cabin standing on the southeast corner of the intersection of East State and Second Streets, the history of the Rockford schools began. Miss Eunice Brown, conducting classes for six pupils that year, served as the community's first teacher." Thus writes Charles Espy, a former superintendent of schools for Winnebago County, describing the dawning of the first day in Rockford education in his 1967 book, *The History of Public Education in Winnebago County*. The "era of the itinerant tutor" ("an institution never very satisfactory in a social sense and very spotty as to results," Louis Bromfield wrote in *The Farm*) had passed. Parents demanded a more stable educational structure for their children, and it emerged in three forms: first, private schools, such as Miss Brown's, which often held their classes in the teacher's home; later, starting in 1857, public schools controlled, variously, by township, city, and county authorities; and, much later, parochial schools. While, in some areas of the East Coast and South, the duty of education moved naturally from the home to the church, a strong Yankee influence led the Midwest to follow the New England model of public education.

From the beginning, the rising tide of public education was designed to lift all boats. Bromfield's Jamie favored public schools over the traveling schoolmaster not simply because they could provide a better education for *his* children, but because "what troubled Jamie most was the fact that under this system the poorer children of the County received no education whatever and grew up without learning to read or write . . . " State constitutions established public education as a universal right, and state statutes authorized local governments to levy property taxes to fund schools. Rockford's initial levy in 1857 of one mill per $100 of assessed value covered the cost of building schools as well as hiring teachers and a few administrators.

The late 1800's were a time of remarkable growth in public education across the Midwest, and the number of school districts multiplied rapidly in Winnebago County, while, within districts, building programs established the network of neighborhood schools that school consolidation and busing have destroyed. The one-room schoolhouse, usually white or stone rather than red, became a common sight in the countryside.

Scott P. Richert is the executive editor of Chronicles.

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By 1903, when the first school consolidation in Illinois took place right here in Winnebago County, there were 124 separate school districts in the county, many consisting of just one or two schools. Their numbers decreased rapidly: By 1920, the county had consolidated down to 110 districts; by the time of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), there were only 39 districts left. Over the next 40 years, *Brown* would accelerate school consolidation and the destruction of neighborhood schools; busing, however, was more a consequence of school consolidation than a cause.

By the time Espy published his *History of Public Education in Winnebago County* in 1967, there were a mere 25 school districts left in the county. District 205 was now larger than the city of Rockford. Two decades later, as the federal court prepared to intervene, District 205 had gobbled up another nine school districts, and it now covered essentially the entire southeastern corner of Winnebago County.

School consolidation paved the way for the social engineering that destroyed public education in the second half of the 20th century; what, however, led to school consolidation? We know the arguments that were made by its proponents: Bigger schools offered greater opportunities for students and allowed for a standardized curriculum; larger districts had more resources at their disposal; smaller districts and one-room schools did not fit with the latest educational theories, which required separate grades and multiple teachers. (In the 1930's, the Rockford school district adopted a high-school hour model for elementary schools, an experiment it later abandoned.) Still, in Illinois and throughout the Midwest, school consolidation needed to be approved by the voters. Why did parents accept the arguments of the "experts"?

In *The Farm*, Bromfield writes of "the inflated reverence for schools and academies and universities which caused them to spring up like mushrooms everywhere in the Middle Western country during the second half of the nineteenth century." He ascribes this attitude to "a generation or two which . . . had had little opportunity for education and so sought exaggerated advantages for their children and grandchildren." That inflated reverence was applied to educated men as well as educational institutions, and it was not confined to a generation or two. In fact, as the general population became better educated, the reverence for education grew rather than diminished, and the popular cult of the "expert" took root.

It is one thing to believe that operating a nuclear-power plant requires a certain level of knowledge that the average person does not possess; it is quite another to become convinced that someone else, by virtue of his education, can direct the education of your children better than you can (even if he might be able to *teach* your children better). The "experts" can cry, "Think of the children!" but parents have been thinking of their children from time immemorial and managing, largely, to make wise decisions on their behalf without the benefit of "expert" advice. Relying on "experts" and acquiescing in their plans often is simply the flip side of a failure of nerve. The irony is that the very system that convinced parents to entrust the education of their children to more highly educated experts was undermined by the centralizing programs of the very "experts" to whom the parents had ceded their authority.

Charles Ingalls would have understood the problem. When the Ingalls family was living in DeSmet, Dakota Territory (the period covered by Laura Ingalls Wilder in *Little Town on the Prairie*), Charles was a member of the school board—the only one, as Laura tells us, who had children in the school. The other board members seem to be men who are concerned about the general extension of education, and they are probably better educated than Charles, but Charles is there because he is "Pa." When the teacher, Miss Wilder (the sister of Laura's future husband), loses control of her one-room schoolhouse for several days, the board appears before the students, and Charles is the only one to speak.

> Slowly and weightily, Pa said, "Miss Wilder, we want you to know that the school board stands with you to keep order in this school." He look sternly over the whole room. "All you scholars must obey Miss Wilder, behave yourselves, and learn your lessons. We want a good school, and we are going to have it."
>
> When Pa spoke like that, he meant what he said, and it would happen.
>
> The room was still. The stillness continued after the school board had said good day to Miss Wilder and gone. There was no fidgeting, no whispering. Quietly every pupil studied, and class after class recited diligently in the quiet.

As we have moved from Miss Wilder's one-room schoolhouse to the massive Columbines of today, what have we gained? American public education lags behind the rest of the civilized world, and we turn to Chinese and Pakistanis to fill our high-tech jobs—not because they will work more cheaply, but because they can actually do the math. Even on the most basic level, American public education is a failure: The literacy rate, once over 90 percent, is now around 75 percent and falling. We spend more money *per capita* on public education than at any time in our history, and as many as 30 percent of students cannot read or write at grade level. (Those are official figures; in reality, the percentage may be higher.)

Where do we go from here? One thing is clear: An elected school board of seven members cannot possibly redirect a bureaucracy that oversees a district of 27,000 students and a budget of close to $300 million. During Rockford's 12-year battle with the federal courts, only two of the candidates who were elected on vows to fight judicial taxation and restore local sovereignty came anywhere close to living up to them. The rest, upon election, lost their nerve when the "experts" told them that the only way out from under federal control was to go along with judicial taxation and racial quotas.

A new day in Rockford public education did not dawn on March 19; on that day, we simply passed another way station on the road to destruction. The conservative panaceas—school vouchers, charter schools, school prayer—ignore the underlying problem. Johnny praying the Our Father at the beginning of the school day will not make his parents more involved, and transferring him to a charter school or a private school under a voucher program may even lead his parents to think they can be *less* involved, because Johnny is now in a better environment. While the homeschooling movement arose out of a recognition that parents should direct their children's education, it still needs to strike the right balance between directing and teaching (which might be done by others), and, in this regard, the rise of homeschooling cooperatives is a hopeful sign. Ultimately, American education will only revive when parents recover sufficient nerve to act as Charles Ingalls did. Let's think of the children.

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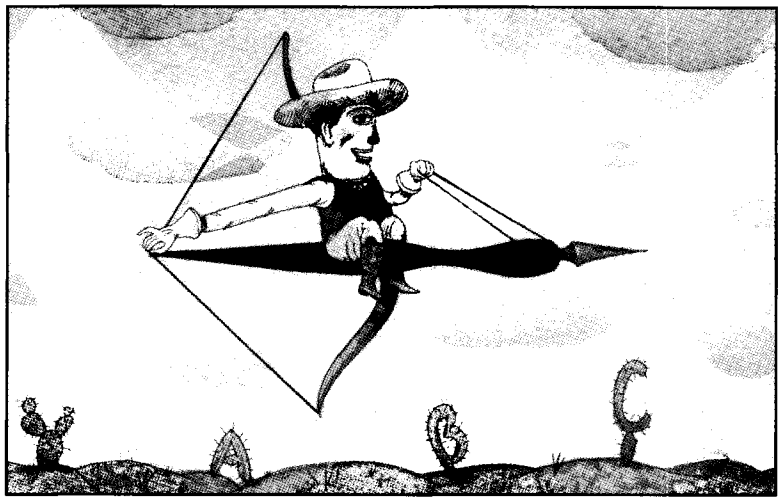
Cowboys and Indians

A Few Notions About Creative Writing

by George Garrett



Earl Kelemy

This little piece requires a head note. Oddly, it is the only thing I have ever written that was honest-to-God censored. I was asked by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* to write a short opinion piece on the subject of contemporary creative writing courses, etc.—the scene. I wrote this piece, following their guidelines exactly for length and general tone. After a while it came back to me with the explanation that they didn't approve of my opinions. Not at all. They didn't even suggest revising my opinions. Beyond the pale. See if you can figure out why. I can't.

In the beginning we were the rebels. The real beginning was during the late 40's and early 50's, that astonishing time of the GI Bill when American colleges and universities were suddenly booming and changing. We asked for courses in 20th-century literature, and we got that, together with fair and accurate warning from the elders that the canon would, sooner or later, constitute a bloody battlefield. Along with that we wanted the opportunity to write our poems and stories and novels on the institution's time and for credit. Won that one, too, and so completely that now there are poets and writers teaching writing courses in hundreds of colleges and universities. It has been a radical change far beyond the wildest expectations of the very few of us, raggedy in our faded fatigues and field jackets, who came out of the jungle and mountains to civilization. Our fearless leader (Fidel) was (is) R.V. Cassill, first at Iowa, then Brown. We were few in number as late as the middle 60's when Cassill and his wife, Kay, founded and managed the Associated Writing Programs (AWP) in the basement of their house in Providence. There were a dozen or so member institutions then, though there were already many schools with writers on the faculty and with courses and programs. We had so little visibility and money and clout at first that other writers and schools took a wait-and-see attitude and maintained that until, finally, AWP got some real support, big bucks. Then, led by Iowa, which had spurned joining anything with others, everybody jumped on board. Nowadays there is a headquarters with a paid bureaucracy and a newsletter and a job list and prizes and annual conventions and plenty of members eager to be elected to a list of officers. A new (ancient) crowd.

And here am I, an old-timer already, still following the leader (Cassill said it first, if differently) urging that we now take a giant step back and at least weigh and reconsider the values and dangers arising out of the association of writers with the academy. Undergraduate creative writing courses probably should continue, be kept alive and well. Close reading and closely watched writing are essential components in the lost battles against functional illiteracy. It's most of the graduate programs I wonder about, the ones that these days furnish so many books to publishers and most of the teachers of creative writing. There are superb writing programs. Hollins College is the best. And a very different kind of program at Arkansas is equally praiseworthy. Most of them, however, are depressingly uniform and uniformly mediocre. Just lately there have been some strong, cogently argued critical pieces about writing programs. Eve Shelnutt's "Notes From a Cell: Creative Writing Programs in Isolation" (*AWP Chronicle*, February 1990) and John W. Aldridge's "American Assembly-Line Fiction" (*American Scholar*, Winter 1990) make strong cases against the acquired bad habits and results of writing programs. Both are critical of the anti-intellectualism (read: *ignorance*) of the programs, the hierarchical networking (what Aldridge calls "this highly politicized fraternity of writing instruction"); and both are seriously con-

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cerned by the absence of normative models and of eclectic diversity in the programs and their products and, also, by the changing relationship of the writer and society.

These points are well taken, but I have others, based on years of experience in the trenches as an employee of several different kinds of institutions. Seems to me that our colleges and universities—I speak almost exclusively of the vague humanities, sparing science, engineering, etc., where, even in the most theoretical of modes, there is less tinkering with and distortion of hard facts—are a mirror image of the world and the times they inhabit. The institutions are not nearly as separate from the common vices and virtues of the age as they often imagine themselves to be; though both vices and virtues are often camouflaged by a certain respectability, which Americans, innocently enough, still attribute to educators and educational institutions. Thus, I have to argue that there are probably no more liars, thieves, cheaters, polluters (real and metaphorical), criminals, and invincibly ignorant incompetents within the institutions than there are in society at large. But no fewer either.

Once upon a time in Los Angeles, I found myself at lunch with a group of talent agents, sharks of the movie industry, where conversation was all about the insatiable appetites of the great white sharks at the top of the Hollywood food chain. Eager to join in, I told them a couple of anecdotes about feeding frenzy in academe. Shocked them thoroughly. Left them open-mouthed. "Do you mean people like that are allowed to teach our children?" they asked.

Our contemporary institutions of higher learning are built on the corporate model without benefit of the checks and balances that are required to produce a worthwhile product and to turn a profit. To the pervasive administrative inefficiency and complacency and incompetence that has always plagued us must be added a full share of the other woes and faults and tribulations of the age. We have more than enough of our own Boeskys and Trumps and Milkens. And some of them are poets and fiction writers who know no other world or way of life. One good reason for writers to dissociate themselves from academe is to avoid the bad company there, including the bad company of each other.

But there are some better reasons. One of these is the chilling effect on freedom of speech and thought that is felt, not only aesthetically but also politically and socially by writers in an academic context these days. Since amiable visibility and consequent prizes and honors are urgently important to the artist in academe, there is a serious disincentive to any experimentation beyond the most commonplace gimmickry and any exploitation of unfashionable notions that might seem to challenge the *beaux arts* establishment. Originality is defined as finding your place and staying in it. On an aesthetic level this deprives us all of variety (choices). On a political and social level, with the brown- and black-shirt children of the 60's now safely arrived at middle age and position in academe, there is a tendency toward an unquestioning, reflexive uniformity of thought and language, which limits intellectual inquiry and discourages the kind of critical scrutiny out of which true innovation may come to pass. If "correct" political and social stances are required for promotion and tenure (and they certainly are), the artist will either conform or, anyway, limit himself/herself to the aesthetic level of experience.

Is it any wonder that we have just finished a decade of some of the most polished and boring poetry and some of the most competent and inconsequential fiction in our national history? If the situation were not so dangerous, it would be simply farcical.

Easy and safe to say for one so near to retirement age anyway, but nevertheless I am convinced that we have now outgrown the good (and there was some) of the close association of writers and academe. Writers would be better off in almost any other line of work. An exception is those underclass and minority writers whose voices, previously unheard, would be lost to us again without some special support. And, of course, such a course would be hard on the poets, many of whom lack even basic entry-level skills; but perhaps this could be corrected by programs in vocational training.

Yesterday's rebels are today's fat cats, and the last great concentration of unreconstructed Marxists (not counting Albania) is now to be found in our English departments. My view is simply that writers, young and old, will be well advised to slip out of the circle of wagons and rejoin the lively Indians riding on the outside.

c

Light

Peter Hunt

See how this elm, lit underneath by sun
In early afternoon, its Autumn leaves
A fiery gold, not yet limp and dun,
But crisply-gleaming flakes in solid sheaves,
Fades to pale yellow when the flame expires,
A brief reflected blaze gone out when twilight
Settles in, as time-bound earth requires,
All borrowed lustre soon eclipsed by night.
Oh, let not my declining life, though gone
My body's strength, be burnished by a gold
That quickly fades like leaves, at evening wan
And sinking sodden in the yellowing cold.
But let my sovereign Sun of life Divine,
Burning bright on me, eternal shine.

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Chronicles Intelligence Assessment

Putin's Gamble: Playing the Terrorist Card

by Denis Petrov

When Russian President Vladimir Putin called President Bush shortly after the September 11 terrorist attacks to express his solidarity, pundits East and West took this as a sign of what one American columnist called the coming "earthquake" in U.S.-Russia relations. Putin was aiming to shift his policy focus westward, away from his previous "Eurasianist" effort to use Moscow's relations with Beijing, New Delhi, Tehran, and the Arab world to balance the "unipolar" nature of a U.S.-dominated post-Cold War world order. This political tectonic shift would potentially make Russia a full-fledged member of the Western world and radically alter the world's political alignment from East-West to North-South. Historically Christian/European/Western First World states (plus Japan) would join with the historically Orthodox Second World Russia in an effort to fight off an aggressive Third World movement: "international terrorism," the chosen weapon of resurgent Islam.

Such a realignment is unlikely. Last fall, however, it did seem possible that Russia could move closer to the West in cooperative efforts, making Moscow a "partner" if not a "friend," and damping mutual hostility. Even though Washington has done little so far to satisfy the Kremlin's hopes for a partnership—and has even taken a number of steps that have antagonized Moscow and animated Putin's critics—it may not be too late to take advantage of the end of the Cold War to forge a new strategic relationship with Russia.

Moscow should no longer be considered a strategic enemy of the United States or the West. Still, it is important for Washington to understand what is happening within the Kremlin and why Putin so suddenly changed his political tack. If Putin's motives, particularly those rooted in Russian domestic politics, were understood by American policymakers, Washington would have a clearer idea of the opportunities for—and limitations of—future cooperation.

In the spring of 1999, the Yeltsin "clan," also known as the "family"—the loosely knit network of Kremlin courtiers, Yeltsin relatives, oligarchs, gangsters, and media magnates—was desperately looking for a successor to Boris Yeltsin. Yeltsin himself was in declining health, slipping in and out of an alcoholic stupor, while family enemies were sensing blood in the water. The task was not easy: The Kremlin entourage had to find a candidate who could not only attract the support of Russia's elites and the country's electorate but guarantee the safety and well-being of the family in years to come, as well as the stability of the post-communist order Yeltsin and company had built.

As far back as 1996, "Oligarch Number One" Boris Berezovsky was conducting a talent search, hunting far and wide for a potential successor to the "father of Russian democracy." Yeltsin was engaged in an electoral fight for his political life, a struggle that nearly killed him. (Yeltsin suffered a heart attack during the campaign, which was kept secret at the time.)

At this pivotal moment, Aleksandr Ivanovich Lebed stepped onto the political scene. The populist former Airborne Forces general was a charismatic straight-talker who projected a physical presence that rivaled Yeltsin's. With Communist candidate Gennadi Zyuganov gaining in the polls and Yeltsin adopting "patriotic" rhetoric to attract potential voters from the nationalist-communist coalition, Berezovsky and Kremlin Chief of Staff Anatoli Chubays spotted Lebed as the potential spoiler and began financing his campaign. Eventually, the family was able to stuff enough ballot boxes and pour enough illicit funds into the right hands to peel enough votes away from Zyuganov to win Yeltsin a second term.

Lebed, named secretary of the Russian Security Council as payment for his electoral help, did not last long in the family-led Kremlin: Berezovsky, Chubays, and Yeltsin had eyed Lebed as a possible presidential successor, but the veteran of the Soviet war in Afghanistan proved too independent for the family's tastes, and he was fired in the fall of 1996.

What Yeltsin and company did gain from the Lebed episode, however, was insight into what the Russian public, as well as Russian elites, might want in Yeltsin's successor. Lebed's military background and promises to impose order on chaotic post-communist Russia went over well with Russians weary of the family's antics, crime, and general social decay. His tough-guy image and fondness for folksy aphorisms, as well as his laconic manner and reputation for honesty, seemed to fit the bill. More to the point, Russia's oligarchs and regional bosses had decided that "Yeltsinism" needed to be reined in: The battles between the oligarchs and their allied organized-crime bosses had grown too risky and bloody. Berezovsky himself had been targeted by assassins. If the family's "gray cardinal"—who narrowly escaped death when his car, not to mention his bodyguard, was blown to bits in the center of Moscow—was not safe, then no one was. A certain amount of order—a regularization of the "oligarchic system"—was needed. Some even dreamed of a Russian Pinochet, a role Chubays and Berezovsky seemed to want Lebed to play.

The talent search continued over the next three years, with one-time border troops commander Andrei Nikolayev and former interior minister Sergei Stepashin among the candidates. Stepashin was eventually named premier, a step some took as a sign that the family intended to use the premiership as a springboard to the presidency; but Stepashin, too, was dismissed.

Between the fall of 1998 and the spring of 1999, the family took a shine to Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, a protégé of St. Petersburg Mayor Anatoli Sobchak and Kremlin property manager Pavel Borodin. Putin, a former Soviet KGB officer, was eventually elevated over many of his peers and made chief of the Federal Security Service (FSB). Though the diminutive Putin lacked Lebed's physical presence, his tough-guy de-

Denis Petrov, who frequently visits Russia, was reportedly never considered for the presidency of Russia.

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meanor and background as a member of what Russians call the "special services" matched the image the Kremlin wanted to cultivate for a potential successor. Putin also had a reputation as an economic liberal from his days as a deputy to Sobchak and, more importantly, was known for his loyalty to his patrons, a quality in short supply among members of Russia's elite.

With the family's enemies rallying around the banner of Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and former premier Yevgeni Primakov, Yeltsin in and out of the hospital, and parliamentary elections set for December 1999, the family's political operatives hatched what came to be known inside the Moscow Ring Road as "Operation Putin." The masterminds of Operation Putin were likely Berezovsky and Kremlin Chief of Staff Aleksandr Voloshin. Together, they quickly garnered support from Russian elites for the formation of a new political party, Unity, and began a smear campaign in Russian media, targeting Luzhkov in particular.

The rest, as they say, is history: Using the invasion of Dagestan by Chechen rebels that summer and the subsequent bombing of apartment buildings in Moscow and southern Russia to maximum effect, the Kremlin spin doctors cast Putin, now elevated to the premiership, as the hard-boiled "special services" strongman who would defeat the insurgents and restore order to the chaotic Russian Fatherland. Not surprisingly, Putin endorsed Unity in the parliamentary elections. The combination of the media war on the Luzhkov-Primakov coalition and the burnishing of Putin's image, together with the newly minted premier's promises to Russia's oligarchs not to carry out a "review of privatization" (that is, to oversee yet another rough-and-tumble "redivision of property," as Primakov and Luzhkov were insisting on), propelled Unity to victory and opened the door to the grand finale of "Operation Putin," Yeltsin's dramatic announcement on December 31, 1999, that he would retire early, leaving Putin as acting president. Putin won election in March 2000, and the post-Yeltsin era, so some thought, had begun.

Yeltsin, however, was not about to go away. President Putin made frequent visits to the former president's *dacha* outside Moscow, reportedly to ask Yeltsin's advice on personnel matters. The word in Moscow was that Putin had made a deal with Yeltsin and his daughter and chief advisor, Tatyana Dychenko, that certain ministers and members of the presidential staff would not be replaced without the family's permission. Some said the deal was to last one year, others said two. Whatever the case, it became apparent early in Putin's presidency that he was hostage to the elite "clans" that had backed him as Yeltsin's successor. Putin, for instance, was forced to withdraw the candidacy of fellow St. Petersburger Dmitri Kozak for the post of general prosecutor, replacing him with a family-backed candidate. The "power structures," the defense and security apparatus that backed Putin's decision to mount a full-scale military operation in Chechnya in the fall of 1999, also appeared to buck the wishes of the nominal commander-in-chief on occasion.

Rumors that Putin was being blackmailed persisted in Moscow: Stories that the president's alleged taste for young men had supposedly been captured on videotape by Kremlin intriguers circulated in elite circles. Berezovsky, now out of favor in the Kremlin and attempting to ensure his own safety, sometimes dropped hints that he had proof of the family's involvement in the fall 1999 terrorist attacks that helped propel Putin to the presidency. Proof of either rumor could have destroyed Putin politically.

Putin's abrupt reversal of an east-focused foreign policy seems to have been rooted in his desire to break out of the box the clans, particularly the family, have kept him in since his appointment as premier more than two years ago. Putin apparently realized that the September 11 terrorist attacks, and Washington's response to them, justified Russia's war in Chechnya, which, in turn, justified his own presidency. The opportunities were too good to pass up: By cooperating with Washington's "war on terrorism," Putin put an end to rumored plans by Berezovsky, some regional elites, and disgruntled military and security officers to mount an opposition to the Russian president or even remove him from office. Any attempts to blackmail Putin by bringing up the September 1999 terrorist bombings would henceforth die on the vine, as a significant portion of the country's elites, earlier concerned about Russia being labeled a pariah state, adopted more or less pro-Western views, trumpeting them in the national media. Furthermore, the Yeltsin family would find Putin elevated to the status of U.S. partner and, thus, more difficult to influence. In fact, last November, Russian law-enforcement agencies, following Putin's lead, mounted a series of raids on firms and ministries controlled by some of the most prominent Yeltsin-era oligarchs and apparatchiks, gathering *kompromat* (compromising material) on and opening criminal cases against Berezovsky (now living abroad), Transport Minister Aksenenko (who has since resigned), Customs Committee Chief Vanin, and State Emergencies Minister Shoygu, even as Putin's St. Petersburg cronies gradually began displacing old guard "Yeltsinoids" in the state apparatus. Even Voloshin, head of the Presidential Administration and the most influential family-era operative in the Kremlin, was threatened with criminal investigation.

Putin has played the terrorist card in a game that has both domestic and international-geopolitical facets. He is gambling that the concessions he hopes to gain from the Bush administration at the upcoming Moscow summit (set for May) will be enough to placate opposition in the military-industrial complex; that the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan will prove successful, eliminating a dire threat to Russian security; and that his enhanced stature as a world leader will ensure his political security, as well as provide opportunities for Russia's oligarchs to profit as economic cooperation with the West deepens, particularly in the oil-and-gas sector. (Russia has cast itself as a more reliable trade partner than the Arab-dominated OPEC countries.)

If he is wrong—if the American campaign falters; if Central Asia and the Caucasus sink further into chaos; if Islamic radicalism makes further inroads in Russia; if the Bush administration, which has so far failed to respond to Putin's moves with concessions of its own and has embarrassed Putin by its blatant disregard of Russian interests, continues its aggressive line; or if the West is far less cordial toward Russia's oligarchs than it currently seems—then his stint as Russian president could conceivably be shorter than expected. Thus far, Russian elites have not appeared to be searching for a Putin substitute, but the balance of forces in Russian politics, as Gennadi Zyuganov could testify, can shift quickly.

How, then, should Washington respond to Putin's initiatives? So far, by abrogating the ABM treaty, continuing plans to expand NATO, sending military advisors to Georgia, strengthening ties with the Central Asia regimes, and resuming its criticism of Moscow's Chechen campaign, the Bush administration

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has shown little inclination to satisfy the Kremlin's hopes. Nevertheless, Russian cooperation in the immediate struggle with the Taliban and Al Qaeda has continued, and Putin apparently hopes that his friendly stance will prompt Washington to reciprocate.

President Bush should avoid the temptation to personalize America's relationship with Russia. Putin is not acting out of altruistic motives, nor is the Russian leader a man about whom President Bush should harbor any illusions. Vladimir Putin was installed by the thugs, killers, gangsters, and corrupt apparatchiks who make up the "oligarchy." He has shown no inclination to change that system. Should St. Petersburgers and intimates of Putin displace key Yeltsin-era operatives, it is very likely that this changing of the guard would merely mean that a new bunch of thugs, killers, gangsters, and corrupt apparatchiks had replaced the old. We cannot, therefore, expect anything more than limited cooperation with Putin's Kremlin, regardless of which clan wins the struggle. It is improbable, for example, that Moscow will ever be very cooperative in international efforts to roll up terrorist-connected financial networks, since Russian organized crime has been involved in terrorism-related money-laundering, drug trafficking, and arms sales. Putin himself has personal ties to Russian mobsters, particularly in his native St. Petersburg.

Nevertheless, the United States can and should deal with Russia on those matters of strategic importance enumerated above. Thus far, however, Washington has done nothing but humiliate Moscow, causing even friendly observers to question the wisdom of the Kremlin's crucial aid to America's "war on terrorism" in Afghanistan. Washington's stance, perceived as outright arrogance by Moscow, has only fanned the flames of anti-Americanism in Russia and, probably, around the world. The Bush administration could do much to dampen anti-American hostility by, for instance, halting its aggressive and wholly unnecessary efforts to expand NATO eastward, a low-cost move that would help ensure continuing Russian cooperation in Afghanistan.

That is not to say that the Bush administration should give Putin's Kremlin everything it wants. There are some things the White House should deny the Kremlin: An open door for Russian immigration and travel, for instance, has merely acted as a way for organized crime from the former Soviet Union to spread its tentacles around the globe. The same Russian "businessmen" who are reportedly buying gas stations in the United States have forged partnerships with mafia drug-runners and white slavers based in Russia and Eastern Europe. Their influence in America represents a danger to U.S. security and should be treated as such.

A clearheaded and realistic American policy toward Russia would recognize the critical importance of a mutually advantageous partnership with Russia without falling into the trap of personalizing relations with Moscow: Putin can be a partner on a limited basis. He is not, and cannot be, a friend, and he is not the personification of fledgling Russian democracy or economic reform. U.S. leaders should never base any policy on misguided attempts to "help our friend," as past administrations mistakenly did with both Gorbachev and Yeltsin. In short, Washington should view its mutual relations with Russia—and all foreign states—through the prism of American national-security interests. The United States must inevitably deal with unsavory regimes, as it has so often in the past. These relations should not be viewed as anything more than marriages of convenience. c

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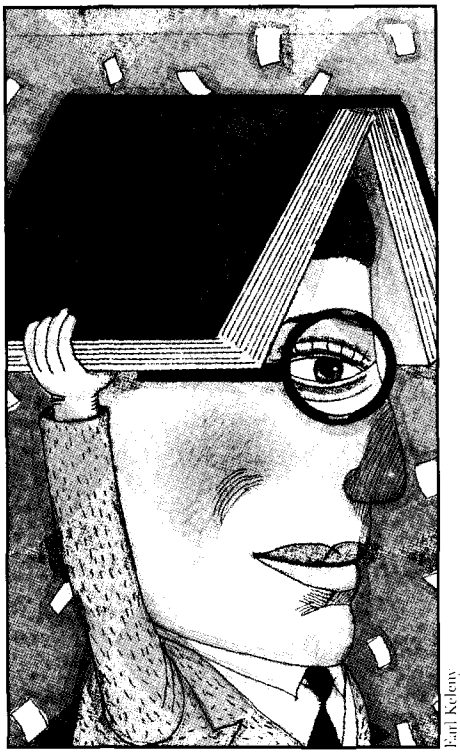
This Is Conservatism?

by Tobias Lanz

"Isn't it pretty to think so?"

—Ernest Hemingway



Earl Keleny

A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism
by Jonathan M. Schoenwald
New York: Oxford University Press; 338 pp., $35.00

There are two fictions that most American conservatives have taken to heart. First, that the Republican Party stands for conservative ideas and principles; second, that there has been a conservative renaissance in the last several decades, a resurgence that culminated with the Reagan presidency and continues into the present. These two false premises form the foundation of Jonathan Schoenwald's *A Time for Choosing*. Schoenwald examines the rise of the conservative movement since World War II and argues that, by the early 1960's, it had articulated a political agenda and created an organizational structure that would eventually make it the dominant force in American politics. What this book, like most that chronicle the history of American conservatism, fails to recognize is that conservatism is far more than a political movement: It encompasses economic, social, cultural, and theological questions. These aspects of conservatism are thoroughly omitted from Schoenwald's analysis. His book reads like a piece of Whig history, a tract that showcases prominent personalities, competing factions, and powerful organizations that created a political movement to compete against liberalism. Yet the conservatism that Schoenwald describes could never really replace liberalism, because it is steeped in all of the progressive assumptions of its supposed nemesis.

Schoenwald employs a natural growth metaphor to describe the history of the movement. To him, modern conservatism was born in the 1950's, struggled to create its identity in the 60's, and finally reached maturity in the late 70's. He identifies three distinct but overlapping strands of thought that gave rise to the movement: traditionalism, libertarianism, and anticommunism. This foundation produced the two groups that led the assault on New Deal liberalism. Schoenwald describes the first as "mainstream" or "electoral" conservatism, which relied on the electoral process and the Republican Party as its vehicles of power. The second group comprises the "extremist" conservatives who used private organizations to disseminate information and broaden the conservative electoral base. The goal of the former was to capture political institutions through which conservative laws and policies could be enacted; the latter sought to instigate a populist movement that would change the political and social climate of the nation. While the two groups pursued different strategies, they were united against the communist threat, the growth of big government, and social decay.

During the Cold War, "extremist" organizations such as the John Birch Society and the Conservative Society of America made significant headway early on. They were instrumental in shifting the GOP to the right, ensuring the nomination of Barry Goldwater as the Republican presidential candidate in 1964. Although Goldwater lost miserably, conservatives remained confident and energized. After all, Goldwater had managed to attract 27 million voters. More importantly, the party had been purged of overt liberalism. This newly conservative GOP began to focus on expanding its electoral base. But one obstacle remained—the "extremists." While many Americans agreed with conservative principles, they remained wary of this element within the Republican Party. Party leaders knew that the group presented an image prob-

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lem. But because it was a substantial faction, they could not afford to alienate it outright. Thus, the "extremists" needed to be carefully neutralized. In Schoenwald's words,

> Republicans marginalized extremists in favor of the solid middle of the party, while simultaneously calculating how to retain extremists' loyalty. In this way the GOP learned to act like a broker state or the informal regulatory system adapted during Franklin Roosevelt's administrations when competing interests fought for attention, favor and a chance to influence the federal government.

By refusing their donations, selectively condemning their activities and ideas, and expanding the party base, party leaders permanently relegated the "extremists" to factional status within the GOP.

For Schoenwald, this ideological reorientation was the turning point in the conservative movement. "Responsible" conservatives had prevailed over the "kooks." This brilliant campaign strategy gave the GOP an air of ideological objectivity and allowed it to challenge the Democrats at every political level. The party used charming candidates to show that conservatives were not curmudgeons or reactionaries. Moreover, Lyndon Johnson's blunderings in Vietnam and his mismanagement of the economy played into Republican hands, as did the continued decay of American social life exemplified by the sexual revolution, crime, and the general revolt against authority. All served to galvanize Americans against the liberal establishment and deliver them to the Republican Party. But Schoenwald attributes the success of the conservative movement, in the end, to its focus on issues rather than ideas and its management by professional conservatives—publicists, fundraisers, and policy people—who could steer it toward electoral victory.

Those who believe that a conservative revolution really occurred are sadly mistaken. The Republican Party took an ideological movement and used it to create a pragmatic "vote getting machine." In order to build this machine, modern conservatives, unlike the Old Right, recognized that political power in 20th-century America no longer resided at the local and regional level: It was now concentrated in massive national institutions. Democrats understood this as early as the 1930's. They utilized the federal government—the most expansive national institution of all—as an instrument of social change. As a result, they were able to reshape society in an unprecedented fashion, and the material and ideological consequences were indeed revolutionary. Another generation passed before conservatives began to comprehend and respond to this transformation. And to the credit of the Republican Party of the 1960's, it did develop a respectable critique of New Deal liberalism. But it did *not* defeat it.

Big government was never dismantled. Instead, the GOP pursued a balance of power with the left. The Republicans developed their own pillars of institutional power: big business and those aspects of big government—especially the military—that served their ends. By creating new centers of national political power, conservatives had finally joined the Managerial Revolution that began with the New Deal. Thus, the real story of Schoenwald's book is less the rise of conservatism than how the Republican Party co-opted an organic political and social movement and reshaped it to fit comfortably into the prevailing power structure. To do this, the party had to imitate Democratic electoral strategies and organizational structures. Most importantly, it had to pursue the main tenets of liberal ideology, which focused on social progress and the centralization of power. If conservatives, in short, wanted to compete in the modern world, they had to adapt themselves to mass society and the mass institutions that ran it. Thus, for every progressive institution and popular idea that liberals developed, modern conservatives created or discovered their own. Rather than champion big government, they championed big business; rather than pursue political solutions, they pursued economic ones; against welfare spending, they championed defense spending; rather than allow Hollywood to dictate American values, they chose Wall Street.

The main problem with Schoenwald's book is that, like most writings on contemporary American politics, it fails to contextualize political struggles within these new constellations of power. (Most contemporary observers see the shift in power from localities and regions to the national level as either a neutral development or a positive one that was probably inevitable.) Schoenwald does provide insightful and detailed discussions of the personalities and factions within the conservative movement. *A Time For Choosing* is also well written and researched. But in the final analysis, it is narrow and naive, assuming that all meaningful political action takes place within the formal framework of political parties and elected office. In this view, politics is a contest in which competition and compromise lead to a result that may not be desirable to everyone but which reflects, nonetheless, the will of the people. The older elements of the conservative movement—traditionalism, libertarianism, and anticommunist populism, many of whose representatives were labeled "extremists" and ultimately silenced or purged from the Republican Party—were the very groups that remained skeptical of these assumptions.

Schoenwald's use of a simplistic growth metaphor to describe the rise of conservatism is also questionable, as it reduces the range of differing views and ideas within conservatism to those held by two groups: one that had "matured" and one that had not. To Schoenwald, maturation is synonymous with formalization and ideological moderation. Thus, in its early stages, the movement was filled with youthful dynamism. But as "irrational" and esoteric (immature) elements got out of hand, they had to be disciplined by the "responsible" (mature) conservatives, who finally put together a winning strategy based on their ability to manage a political movement and to sell an ideological one to the American public. Silencing "extremism" may have been a good tactical call for the GOP, but the party also squelched an incipient populist movement that might have been cultivated in time to create a conservative counter movement against the cultural revolution of the 1960's. It was not just the populists who lost; so did the intellectuals. With the move to pragmatism, some of the most original conservative theories and critiques of the *status quo*—those articulated by Russell Kirk, Richard Weaver, Robert Nisbet, Murray Rothbard, and others—were purged from party philosophy and policy. By the creation of a rationalized mainstream conservatism, the emotional dynamism and intellectual rigor that had characterized the earlier phases of the movement were lost.

Back in 1965, James Burnham said that, even if a conservative like Ronald Reagan were elected president, it would do little to alter the structure and ideolog-

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ical orientation of the American system. The prescience of his view has been confirmed. Even at the height of the "conservative revolution," the managerial power structure continued to grow in size and influence. As it did, the older centers of power that were rooted in family, community, region, and religion continued to weaken.

Perhaps an even more significant index of the prevailing power of liberalism is its influence over American culture. The revolt against authority that began in the 1960's now shapes every aspect of American life. From sexual mores and eating habits to language, music, and dress codes, America has rejected the conservative norms of her Christian heritage in favor of those articulated by the liberal establishment. The rise of lifestyle politics that began in the 1960's was really the second phase of the revolution that began with the political-economic synthesis of the New Deal. If the expansion of the state neutralized the older centers of influence by creating government dependency, the cultural revolution of the 1960's sought to destroy them by focusing American society on the quest for material gratification.

We now have a fat, lazy, greedy, and comfortable society. Our new way of life contradicts anything that can historically be deemed "conservative." Yet this contradiction is completely lost on modern conservatives. Perhaps it is because so many of them are deeply invested in maintaining the new culture, as evidenced by the fact that "conservative" corporate America has been one of the main engines driving the cultural revolution. Hedonism is good business. By aggressively selling a world of sensate pleasure, colossal business corporations have been as effective as the modern state in undermining social order by diluting the very principles that held it together: obligation, thrift, discipline, and faith. More importantly, the managers in charge of big business and big government know full well that Americans are addicted to the new way and will do anything—or rather, see anything done—to conserve it. Witness the Bush administration's declaration that it was our patriotic duty to "spend, spend, spend," so that the economy would not falter after September 11. Or take the unanimous political support for mass immigration. Ostensibly, current immigration policy is intended to keep the economy running and to make good on America's promise to care for the world's huddled masses. But the managerial class also benefits because it expands its power over ever-greater numbers of laborers, consumers, and welfare recipients. Middle America believes it also gains by avoiding the humiliating work of washing dishes, cooking food, cleaning house, and rearing children.

Mass society has become standardized and softened to the point where it is easily manipulated by political and economic elites. Modern conservatism has been wholly ineffective in mitigating this danger, precisely because it is part of the problem. From Wall Street to Washington, modern conservatives still trumpet the ideas espoused by the Old Right, yet the blather of "family values" and "controlled spending" rings hollow in a society where the majority of conservative voters are fully invested in mass culture. To paraphrase Michael Oakeshott, modern conservatives may believe in conservative ideas, but they resort to a liberal style in politics. And, we can add, they also adhere to a liberal lifestyle. Modern conservatives may lead ugly lives, but at least they can think pretty thoughts. Ideology, then, is the only *real* difference between modern conservatives and liberals. Whether you espouse liberal or conservative ideas means very little when the material and structural circumstances influencing your existence are identical either way.

A key issue cementing the various conservative strands after 1964 was anticommunism. Today, however, this cause has evaporated, and many wonder whether a new issue can give rise to a countercultural conservative movement that rejects both the materialism of modern American life and the power structures that support and direct it. Conservatives must choose a different tactic. As Wendell Berry has noted, modernization can only be defeated in those areas where it cannot effectively function—in rural towns, small neighborhoods, even inner cities. In such locales, strong families, communities, and religious organizations can at least restrain the power of large institutions.

Who can lead and organize such a movement? Certainly, nobody who is invested in the Washington-Wall Street-Hollywood power triangle, as the neoconservatives are. The Christian Right cannot, because it is intellectually inept. The scattered and battered remnants of the Old Right are still the best qualified to articulate a defense against an inherently liberal mass society. But only by convincing Middle America that the *status quo* is not to their advantage can any countermovement be successful. The populist element may yet hold the key to an authentic conservative resurgence. Conservatives were given a choice in 1964, but the only options then were political—and true conservatives have always known that cultural problems cannot be solved by purely political means.

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Ho, Ho, Ho, and a Bottle of Fun

by J.O. Tate

The Nautical Chart
by Arturo Pérez-Reverte
New York: Harcourt, Inc.;
466 pp., $26.00

◆

For the fifth time, Señor Pérez-Reverte, the Spanish novelist and international journalist, has presented "a novel of suspense" that adheres to his formula, and this may be his best yet, or at least his longest. The length of this ironic romance is significant; since the author works within a narrow scope and with a small cast of characters (four or five rogues are the ones that count), he is therefore compelled to build up his text with discursive elaboration and imaginative extensions. Like Raymond Chandler, this Hispanic master could fairly claim that he "writes writing," and again like Chandler, he does quite a job of it.

Because the field is restricted, the final revelation must be somewhat predictable, for on this checker board, there is only one move left at the end. But I register no complaint, for there are few living writers to whom I unconsciously plead, "Don't stop!" as they cast their spell. Pérez-Reverte is some kind of magician, all right, but that does not mean that his technique cannot be analyzed. In recognition of, and as a punishment for, his success, he has already been announced as a special topic at the next convention of the Modern Language Association, so we must proceed now to indicate something about his formulaic procedures before he is tarred with the brush of the Male Gaze in a Discourse of Power and the Subversive Strategies Necessitated by a Hetero-Normative Society and the Eurocentric Pathology of Iberian Narcissism, and all the rest of the prospect at which I shudder.

A preliminary sketch of the Pérez-Revertean formula would include the following points, at least. The plot must be grounded in Europe, preferably in Spain. The conflict has to do with a struggle, usually between a man and a woman and others, over possession of a disputed object which is itself a pretext for learning the arcane knowledge it represents. So the struggle becomes an education both in the history and culture represented, and in the characters of the antagonists. The most remarkable property of this formula is that it requires extensive knowledge of, and respect for, the past. And I frankly am unaware of anyone actively writing today who has the imagination as well as the mastery of detail required to pull off what Pérez-Reverte dares.

The disputed object this time is the novel's eponym, as Coy, the marooned sailor, helps the mysterious Tánger in her struggle to locate a shipwreck and its treasure before it is found by the sinister "ponytail" and his henchman, the melancholy dwarf. To accomplish this requires detailed knowledge of Spanish politics of over 200 years ago and detailed knowledge, as well, of the evolution of navigation. And we cannot deny that Coy's desire to know Tánger biblically is another epistemological investigation that is related to the others.

So far, so good; we have been here before in the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, Dashiell Hammett, Gavin Lyall, and many another, which brings us to the second part of the Pérez-Revertean formula: The text is aware of itself in a way that is both postmodern and traditionally romantic. We should remember here that "romanticism"—for Byron and for Melville, among others—entailed a bracing amount of "romantic irony" or self-referentiality, and so what's old is new. The protagonist Coy is continually aware, either in memory or in immediate reference, of every analogue to the adventure he is caught in. These include not only the tradition of cloak-and-dagger thrillers (Jules Verne, etc.) but also of a higher plane of nautical romance represented by Melville, Conrad, and so on. In addition, there is a sly allusion to Pérez-Reverte's own *The Club Dumas* in *The Nautical Chart*, as though the author tipped his hat not so much to himself as to Vladimir Nabokov. Of course, there are also the postmodern aspects, such as the pointed references to Popeye and Bluto and to the adventures of Tintin and various movies. Popeye the Sailor Man is more than a cartoon in this context, because there are at least two episodes in which Coy physically attacks his enemies in such an imprudent fashion that we are forced to realize that he has been overcome by his Popeye self. I will only add that, like the greatest authors (Homer, Shakespeare, Chandler), this young Spanish master pays an informed and proper attention to the ritualistic ingestion of alcohol—gin and tonics, this time. The man has good values—in his books, men are erotically attracted to women, the past is real, culture is respected—which means that, in our present regime of inversion, he will inevitably be attacked for them. But not by me.

Quite the opposite, in fact. Because he is faithful to the restrictions of his formulas, Pérez-Reverte has found freedom within them. He rises to the challenges he sets for himself with remarkable wit and imaginative resource. He has a gift of eloquence that comes through in translation and an unfailing sense of rueful humor that is both hip and Hispanic. So if I say that his books are delightful, I mean just that: full of delight. *The Nautical Chart* is both fun and funny and, as an ironic romance, dead serious as well. If you can find a better book, read it. Otherwise, read this one.

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

Words Like Quartz

by Paul Lake

No Word of Farewell: Selected Poems, 1970-2000
by R.S. Gwynn
Ashland, OR: Story Line Press;
167 pp., $16.95

Very Far North
by Timothy Murphy
London: The Waywiser Press;
108 pp., $18.95

◆

If even a rough correspondence between poetic accomplishment and public reputation existed in America today, R.S. Gwynn would be one of our most widely read and highly honored poets. The publication of his selected poems, *No Word of Farewell*, would be an occasion for readers to measure the arc of a 30-year career. Today, however, when a shallow and self-serving creative-writing establishment doles out literary honors, a maverick like Gwynn remains largely neglected. Though widely published in journals and chapbooks, Gwynn has pre-

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viously published only one full-length collection, *The Drive-In* (University of Missouri Press). Dana Gioia, in his introduction to Gwynn's new book, ascribes the poet's relative obscurity to this odd publication history but leaves unanswered why such a gifted poet has found it so difficult to publish in the first place. Now that Gwynn's poetic output has been gathered into one attractive and easily attainable volume, perhaps this contemporary American master will at last find the audience he deserves.

Gwynn's poetry exploits the full formal resources of English-language verse. A master of traditional forms and meters, Gwynn revels in difficult patterns and cunning rhymes. This classical rigor, combined with a mordant and irreverent wit, has led some critics to classify him as a satirist. But though he has written a number of delightfully wicked satires, Gwynn is a lyric poet of unusual depth and power, displaying a wide range of voices, subjects, and styles, in poems as remarkable for their deep feeling as for their formal restraint. What has perhaps misled critics is that, like all good satirists, Gwynn is a moralist. He skewers human pretensions and cruelty, yet treats suffering and weakness with tenderness and compassion.

A connoisseur and critic of American pop culture, Gwynn casts a cold eye on our society's crass consumerist ethic. Sometimes the poet has only to dramatize our corporate mall morality to pillory it, as in "Local Initiative," a poem about a family's effort to commemorate their son's death in a traffic accident:

> For years they mailed petitions for
> a light
> Or four-way stop; the city deemed
> it best
> To table them until the time was
> right.
> It took The Mall to honor their re-
> quest.
>
> You can't take parents' sorrow to
> the bank
> But you can always bank on corpo-
> rate needs.
> Now like a docile river traffic flows
> By fraying ribbons lost among the
> weeds,
> And slowing to the changing light
> we thank
> Blockbuster, Target, Texaco, and
> Lowes.

In "The Classroom at the Mall," Gwynn exposes the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of pandering academic bureaucrats:

> Our Dean of Something thought it
> would be good
> For Learning (even better for P.R.)
> To make the school "accessible to
> all"
> And leased the bankrupt bookstore
> at the mall
> A few steps from Poquito's Mexi-
> can Food
> And Chocolate Chips Aweigh. So
> here we are—

Gwynn's sharp wit, keen sense of absurdity, and acute moral judgment are most evident in "Among Philistines," which retells the biblical story of Samson and Delilah. Thanks to their fabled exploits, both characters have become famous in our celebrity-worshipping culture, but while Delilah revels in her cheap notoriety, Samson, in true heroic fashion, is disgusted to find himself among tasteless philistines who plaster his image on "The glossy covers of their magazines" and "ads for razors" with captions proclaiming "*Hebrew Hunk Says We Shave Best!*" Juxtaposing the crass diction of commercial advertising with stately biblical prose, the drama reaches its climax as Samson is led "through Gaza Mall / Past shoeshop, past boutique, Hallmark and Sears" uttering a prayer in which both levels of language mingle to comic effect:

> Lord God of Hosts, whose name
> cannot be used
> Promotion-wise, whose face shall
> not adorn
> A cornflake box, whose trust I have
> abused:
> Return that strength of which I
> have been shorn
>
> That we might smite this tasteless
> *shiksa* land
> With hemorrhoids and rats, with
> fire and sword. . . .

In lines like these, Gwynn's wit can easily steal our attention from his remarkable lyricism. But in "Two Portraits" and "Human Nature," his graceful treatment of human and natural subjects calls to mind Richard Wilbur and Robert Frost. In the three sonnets of "Body Bags," Gwynn writes haunting elegies of local characters set in the Vietnam era. Though he skewers charlatans and hypocrites with savage derision, he evokes only compassion and sympathy for the world's has-beens and losers. He can mingle dream and realism in haunting lyrics like "The Drive-In" and, in a suite of poems at the center of the volume, even write of his own first-person encounter with prostate cancer with dignity and grace. The poet's brush with mortality produced both the brilliant monologue "Cléante to Elmire" and the sassy pastiche whose opening line startles with its echo of Jonson's famous elegy: "Farewell, thou joy of my right hand, my toy."

This rich and remarkably varied volume evokes only one small cavil. Sometimes the lighter poems draw out their jokes too far; one Shakespearean sonnet garbled in translation by ViaVoice is quite enough, thanks. What I remember about this remarkable collection, though, is the lyric grace of poems like "In Place of Elegy," which incorporates even the trite language of a composition student killed in an auto accident into an elegy of stunning beauty and pathos.

With such a formidable record of accomplishment behind him, it is time R.S. Gwynn received his due.

Throughout the 19th century, American writers from Ralph Waldo Emerson to the lowest literary hack called for a poet to rise from our native soil and create poetry equal to America's vast and varied landscape. With his second book, *Very Far North*, North Dakota native Timothy Murphy has answered the call, securing the title of laureate for at least one part of this continent-straddling nation. What Virgil was to the Italian peninsula or Homer to the Greek Mediterranean, Murphy is to the swatch of plains stretching from the Upper Midwest to the Rockies like a grassy inland sea. Surprisingly, though, Murphy evokes the stark and pallid colors of this sprawling region not in the long, unruly cadences of a Whitman or Sandburg but in lines as clipped and lapidary as a Roman epigrammatist's.

A venture capitalist and farmer, Murphy exhibits none of the naive optimism of the literary boosters or self-proclaimed laureates of centuries past. Murphy's West is not the Golden West of American myth—of land rushes and yeoman farmers dreaming of empire—but of the deserted plains and shattered hopes left in the wake of Manifest Destiny, where "returning bison, / gathering like a storm, / darken the bare horizon / of a land unfit to farm."

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A traditional poet in every sense of the word, Murphy possesses a classical temperament which comprehends tragedy and human suffering; he knows that "Care furrows the brow / and bows the straightest frame. / Thistles follow the plow, / and hail threshes the grain." Spare and unadorned as a Dakota prairie, Murphy's poems are generally short in line and length, metrically tight and artfully rhymed. They can evoke the solemn tones of a biblical psalm or the lucid brilliance of a Greek lyric. His verbal landscapes and portraits depict the lives and character of his local culture and region yet look beyond them to primal elements and patterns that predate human history:

Our Bronco bucked on rocks as
daybreak's glow
drove darkness down the range
from summit snow.
We rode to where the switchback
track was blocked;
and then we walked
into a world where strings were not
yet strung
on tortoise shells, where Gilgamesh
was young.

Haunted by rituals as old as human consciousness, Murphy's poems mingle observations about farming, hiking, hunting, loving, and dying with allusions to Greek, Native American, and Norse myths. In writing of farming or hunting, he celebrates such ancient virtues as hard work, good husbandry, and expert marksmanship. Concluding his book with a group of poems on Chinese and Japanese history and art, he appears to have found—amidst North Dakota's arid plains and buttes—the fabled Northwest Passage to the East.

Nowhere is Murphy's allegiance to tradition more vividly seen than in his many poems about his literary and ancestral forbears. In "Red Like Him," Murphy salutes his Yale mentor, Robert Penn Warren, whose advice to return to his roots is memorably recorded in "Collateral." In "Horses for My Father," Murphy pays moving tribute to the father who taught him to find his deepest relation to nature in stewardship. And in "The Steward," Murphy combines this theme with another favorite, human and natural generation:

Morris no-till drills
pulled by three Versatiles
keep the soil from blowing
off his communal hills—

hills that the bison haunted
and his Sioux forebears hunted,
fields where the cocks are crowing
and his green sons growing.

As these lines attest, Timothy Murphy's true home lies somewhere northwest of Robert Frost's New Hampshire and Thomas Hardy's Wessex, in a land where words endure like quartz.

Paul Lake's most recent collection of poetry is Walking Backward. *He teaches at Arkansas Tech.*

In the Shadow of Bibendum

by Jeffrey Meyers

Lucky Him: The Life of Kingsley Amis
by Richard Bradford
Chester Springs, PA: Dufour;
432 pp., $37.95

◆

In his *Journals* of the early 1990's, English novelist Anthony Powell observed that Kingsley Amis (1922-95) "has begun to look oddly like Evelyn Waugh. He now seems to be behaving rather like Evelyn too." On the telly, showing full jowl, pot belly, and beefy complexion, and sporting loud check suits, Amis—who moved from trendy Socialist to eccentric Tory—condemned, with reactionary relish, all the vulgar manifestations of contemporary life. Like Waugh, the most unpleasant as well as the wittiest modern writer, Amis was an alcoholic, rude, and insulting, bored to death, and finally paranoid—tormented by the hallucinations, hysteria, and panic attacks that Waugh had vividly described in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold.*

Born in a south London suburb, the son of a lower-middle-class clerk at Colman's Mustard, Amis attended the City of London School and won a "cut-price scholarship" to read English at St. John's College, Oxford. There he met his lifelong friend and correspondent, Philip Larkin, a weird-looking, withdrawn, and pessimistic outsider who provided a striking contrast to the handsome, ebullient Amis. Amis's education was interrupted in 1942 when he became an officer in the Signal Corps, landed in Normandy three weeks after D-Day, and followed the Allied advance through Northern Europe at a safe distance from combat.

After graduating from postwar Oxford with a First Class degree, Amis brought out his first book of poems, *Bright November* (1947), with Reginald Caton's Fortune Press. The firm made money by publishing pornographic novels such as *A Brute Like You* and Sadean accounts of corporal punishment in German prisons. Caton appears, under his own name and with haunting frequency, in many of Amis' novels. But, as Richard Bradford writes in the liveliest part of this book, "the real Caton was almost beyond parody, dressed in a greasy suit and collarless shirt and . . . substituting digressive diatribes for answers to questions."

While working on his B.Litt. thesis at Oxford, "English Dramatic Poetry, 1850-1900, and the Victorian Reading Public" (influenced by Queenie Leavis' *Fiction and the Reading Public* and the sort of subject Amis would later satirize in his novels), he landed his first teaching job at the university at Swansea, in Wales. Twelve years later, he moved to Peterhouse, Cambridge, where he loathed the excessive formality, dressing up, respectability, and gratuitous protocols of the cloistered college life. He also taught for a year at Princeton and at Vanderbilt. Amis's first novel—like those of Thomas Wolfe, Philip Roth, and Joseph Heller—was his best. *Lucky Jim* (1954), which made use of Larkin's letters and is the funniest novel in the English language, went through ten impressions the first year and immediately established his reputation. The poet John Betjeman, in a perceptive review, called it "the equivalent of silent film comedy in prose."

Scott Fitzgerald once remarked that Hemingway needed a new wife (and life) for every stage of his literary career, and the same was true of Amis. Bradford notes that the first stage of Amis's career coincided with his marriage to the charming Hilary Bardwell, the patient Griselda of his life; the second, with his marriage to the glamorous (yet equally submissive) novelist Elizabeth Jane Howard, who also left him; and the third, with his strange *ménage à trois*, when he moved in with Hilary and her third husband, Lord Kilmarnock, and she continued to take care of him.

Amis met Hilary at Oxford in January

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1946 and, proceeding with unusual deliberation, didn't sleep with her (as he finally announced to Larkin) until May. When she became pregnant, they refused to get an abortion and married in 1948. Amis referred to the main characters of *Lucky Jim*, Dixon and Christine, as "D and C," which may have been a sly allusion to dilation and curettage. A nonstop fornicator, he had many affairs during their marriage, and Hilary had a few retaliatory ones of her own before she finally left him in 1956. "Having one's wife f----d is one thing," Amis wrote Larkin, "having her taken away from you, plus your children, is another. . . . It'll be odd to be a bachelor again."

Since, as Bradford writes, the university at Swansea "in 1949 was informed by the Chapel-based morality that was still very influential in South Wales," it's astonishing that Amis never got into trouble after reckless sex with (sometimes underage) students. Opposing this moral ethos, he wrote Larkin: "You know what I should like to see? Apart from two corrupt schoolgirls undressing, I should like to see *a bit of life*. Almost *any* sort. Drinking, or sex, or fine talk." Impressed by Amis's adventures, the more circumspect Larkin wrote of "your staggering skirmishes / In train, tutorial and telephone booth, / The wife whose husband watched away matches / While she behaved so badly in the bath." Many of these liaisons took place in borrowed London flats and evoked the romantic *frisson* of David Lean's *Brief Encounter* and Billy Wilder's *The Apartment*.

Only after Amis had engaged in sex, told Larkin and sometimes even Hilary about it, and then wrote about it in his novels did it become authenticated and entirely real to him. Toward the end of his time with Elizabeth, he lost all sexual desire and made no attempt to treat this problem. He felt sex had destroyed both marriages and moved from priapic to penitential. His psychological (but not physical) impotence was probably caused by intense guilt about using up and then discarding all the women in his life.

During his last phase, Amis lapsed into a regular routine: three hours of writing in the morning, rewarded with two glasses of malt whiskey; early afternoon in the local pub, followed by a late lunch and more drinks at the Garrick Club, where he could "get pissed in jovial not very literary bright *all male* company." Evenings were occupied by comedies on the telly, sustained by more whiskey, beer, and sleeping pills—all of which belie the title of this book. Amis, who lived across the street from the aptly named liquor store Bibendum, wrote two books about drink. As in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, his fictional characters drink obsessively.

Lucky Him—a repetitive and intensely irritating book—is literary criticism disguised as biography. Like an old turkey, it is stuffed with the crumbs of Bradford's previous studies of Amis's work. He has made very little use of Amis's papers at the Huntington Library and the University of Texas, has conducted very few interviews, and has no footnotes to identify his sources. He does not describe Amis's life directly but through his novels, which he reads as straight autobiography. Though he concedes that "it can be unwise and presumptuous to regard books as symptoms of an author's state of mind," he reductively claims that Amis's personal experience "is reproduced in the novels with autobiographical verity," that actual and fictional characters are "interchangeable." This leads to absurdity when Bradford himself confuses real and imaginary people and, when discussing *I Like It Here*, writes of "Bowen alone in the Barley [i.e., the Oates] house." Obsessed with this method, Bradford constantly interrupts the narrative of Amis's life (which I have pieced together for this review) with long and tedious analyses of his 46 books. Bradford devotes, for example, only one sentence to his year in Princeton, but nine pages to his unpublished military novel.

There are several other serious problems. Bradford's style is sometimes pedantically awkward. Instead of writing that Amis and Larkin often exchanged jokes, he states: "It was as though both were in private able to enjoy breaking down the institutionalized borders between comic irreverence and high culture, while in their attempts to produce proper literature they deferred to the humourless conventions of the latter." He frequently insists that his points are "intriguing" (a favorite word) when they are actually quite boring. And he often describes events out of chronological order. He quotes reviews of *I Like It Here* before Amis has finished writing the novel and mentions Amis' encounter with a "splendid busty Redhead" at Princeton well before he ever gets there.

There are, in addition to numerous small errors, some major blunders. The University of South Carolina Press is not in Charleston, but in Columbia. The Mediterranean cruise ship that Amis took in 1981 did not stop in Granada, which is inland, but in the port of Málaga. Connolly's inscription "To Wystan. We must love one another AND die. Cyril," does not prove they had a homosexual affair. Connolly was merely repeating Auden's own emendation of a line in "September 1, 1939," a work Auden eventually thought dishonest and excluded from his *Collected Poems*. And Bradford's assertion that, in 1967, Nashville "had hardly changed at all since before the Civil War" is patently absurd.

Bradford also fails to explain many important aspects of Amis's life. What was the profession of Amis's father-in-law—"an awful price to pay for Hilary" and the model for the absurd professor Neddy Welch in *Lucky Jim*? Why didn't Amis, after getting a First at Oxford, protest when his B.Litt. thesis was failed for personal, rather than academic, reasons? What were Hilary's duties when she supported herself, after leaving Amis, with a job at the Battersea Park Zoo? What sort of relations did Amis have with his three children (Sally became an alcoholic) when they were growing up and as adults? Why did he want to live in Majorca after hating the summer he had spent in Portugal? Why is Tibor Szamuely, "one of Amis' closest friends," not mentioned until after he has died of cancer? Why, if Amis was opposed to translations, did he allow his own works to appear in other languages? What was Kilmarnock's attitude about sharing his wife with Amis? With Amis's irascible temperament, weren't there serious problems and quarrels during the last decade rather than "an admirable state of civility and mature solicitude"?

Bradford's plodding account of Amis's works, propped up by superficial references to his life, seems thoroughly inadequate when compared to the lively evocation of Amis's character in his own *Memoirs* and *Letters*, in Larkin's *Letters* and Andrew Motion's biography of Larkin, in Paul Fussell's memoir and Eric Jacobs' journalistic but firsthand life of Amis, and in Martin Amis's dazzling autobiography, *Experience*.

Jeffrey Meyers' Inherited Risk: Errol and Sean Flynn in Hollywood and Vietnam *will be published in June by Simon & Schuster. He is currently writing a life of Somerset Maugham for Knopf.*

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by Samuel Francis

Who Rules America?

Is there a ruling class in the United States, or are we, as David Brooks suggests in his December 2001 *Atlantic Monthly* article (discussed in my column las month), more like a high-school cafeteria in which separate-but-equal cliques of "jocks," "nerds," and others munch meatloaf together amicably, with no one clique telling the others what to do? Mr. Brooks' memories of his high school are, to say the least, rather different from mine, but be that as it may, his analogy really doesn't apply to the United States on the eve of its absorption into the global stewpot. His view is reminiscent of (and, I think, descended from) the so-called "pluralist" or "consensus" school of sociology that prevailed in academic circles in the 1950's. According to that view, espoused chiefly by a lady named Suzanne Keller, elites do indeed exist, but in modern and especially American society, they are what she called "strategic elites," competing with and balancing each other, so that none unites with the others and none predominates. Sometimes, one elite or a temporary coalition of elites is more powerful than the rest, but that doesn't last long; as a result, political freedom is preserved from the overwhelming domination of a single, monolithic power. Modern society, Miss Keller argues, is just too complex for a single, unified elite to monopolize power and constitute what is usually called a "ruling class."

The strategic elite model is more or less a sociological version of what the Framers thought they were building into the Constitution, with "factions" rather than "elites" checking and balancing each other in the different chambers and branches of the federal government. Happy as it might seem and real as such sociopolitical balances sometimes are, that's not the way it is in America today, nor has it been for several decades.

The main rival to the "strategic elite" theory was the "power elite" model, associated mainly with C. Wright Mills and, more recently, with his disciple, G. William Domhoff. The Mills theory is that a ruling class does exist in the United States and that it consists of the families who constitute a social "upper class" (and are listed in the *Social Register*, a major primary source for Domhoff) and actually own controlling blocs of stock in the major corporations. Power-elite theorists make some allowance for the emergence of corporate managers (whom they see as subservient to, and assimilated within, the old ruling class) and for what Mills called the "warlords"—military leaders whom he believed were gaining more and more power during the age of global warfare. Domhoff, who is somewhat more careful in his analyses than Mills, is of particular interest to conservatives because, in his 1967 book, *The Higher Circles*, he explores the sometimes subtle differences between his views and those of such stalwarts of the Old (and conspiratorial) Right as Dan Smoot and the young Phyllis Schlafly. All three essentially identified the same people and groups as the dominating forces in American society, but Domhoff rejected the purely conspiratorial analysis offered by his counterparts on the right and saw the motivations of the elite more in terms of its structural interests than in ideological purpose.

The problem with the Domhoff-Mills theory, however, is that, first, no matter how long your family has been listed in the *Social Register*, that doesn't really give you any power, except maybe to exclude uncouth guests from your yachting parties; and, second, it really ought to be obvious that the kinds of folks Professor Domhoff mainly talks about—the Morgans, Adamses, Lodges, etc.—don't run much of anything important anymore apart from yachting parties.

Far from the old American upper class absorbing and assimilating the managers who run their banks and corporations, the truth is, as James Burnham saw in the 1940's, that the managers have all but assimilated the owners and have promoted themselves into the upper class (by joining its clubs, sending their kids to its schools, emulating its manners, and sometimes even marrying its daughters). The reason assimilation runs this way and not the other is that the managers are the ones who have the real power, and status, like most other things, follows power.

Managers have the real power because they have the technical and managerial skills to make the banks, corporations, unions, universities, big media companies, and government bureaucracies run. Owners, no matter how much stock they own, *don't*, unless they make a special effort to acquire those skills through education, and not many stockholders from the old upper class do so. As business historian Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., writes, although "wealthy families . . . are the beneficiaries of managerial capitalism," there is "little evidence that these families make basic decisions concerning the operations of modern capitalistic enterprises and of the economy in which they operate," and "members of the entrepreneurial family rarely became active in top management unless they themselves were trained as professional managers."

Technical and managerial skills yield power, both within the mass organizations that now dominate modern society and in the society itself. You or I may own 90 percent of General Motors' or Chase Manhattan's stock, but any effort on our part to run either company would result in bankruptcy within a year. We would have to rely on professional managers, and even if we fired them, we would have to hire others with the same skills.

It makes a considerable difference whether the ruling class consists of traditional upper class stockowners and entrepreneurs or of technically trained managers. For one thing, the old upper class, the *grande bourgeoisie* of American society and the old ruling class from at least the Civil War to the Depression, was more or less rooted in traditional social institutions. It passed on its property and wealth, the basis of its power, through inheritance, and therefore it had a strong vested interest in maintaining both property rights and what some call "family

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values." The family, as well as the local community, religious and ethnic identities, and the cultural and moral codes that respected and legitimized property, wealth, inheritance, social continuity, the personal virtues that helped people acquire wealth and property, and small governments unable to threaten these things—all these served as power bases for the bourgeois elite. Such is not the case with managerial elites.

Managerial elites depend on the technical skills that enable them to gain and keep power inside mass organizations. Their major structural interest lies in preserving and extending the organizations they control and in making sure those organizations are perpetuated. The bourgeois virtues and bonds that served the old elite as instruments of power mean virtually nothing to managers, who can no more pass on their professional skills to their children than the stock owned by the old bourgeoisie can confer the skills needed to run organizations. Hence, managers tend not to depend on families very much, to get divorces and have children who grow up to be loutish illiterates rather than the well-bred Yalies cranked out for generations by the old elites. The managerial scion may inherit whatever wealth his managerial daddy agglomerated, but unless he has the personal brains and discipline to obtain similar skills, he can't step into daddy's shoes at the family firm the way a young Rockefeller or Morgan could. But even aside from the family itself, managers simply don't need bourgeois structures to maintain their power—not the local community, not religion and ethnicity, and not the same cultural and moral codes. Indeed, such institutions merely get in the way of managerial power. They represent barriers against which large corporations and other mass organizations are always colliding, and the sooner such barriers are smashed, the more reach and power the organizations, and the managerial elites that run them, will acquire.

Managerial elites, in other words, have a structural interest in delegitimizing traditional bourgeois institutions and moral codes and in constructing and legitimizing their own, and the history of the late 20th century and the early 21st witnesses the managerial "deconstruction" of the older institutions and codes and the imposition of their own. The managerial codes incorporate the ideological premises of universalism (because managerial interests are global, detached and disengaged from any particular place or group, and extend across many different nations, races, religions, and cultures) and what William H. Whyte in *The Organization Man* called "scientism": "the premise that with the same techniques that have worked in the physical sciences we can eventually create an exact science of man" (because the managerial skills on which the elite depends are based on the application of "science" to social, economic, and political relationships). The managerial portrait of human beings bears more resemblance to the little cutout figures you see in sociological charts and tables than to any human being who ever really existed. An elite that really thinks this is what human beings are like will not hesitate to "plan the economy," design "communities," bomb harmless peasants, manipulate public opinion, impose forced busing, set up concentration camps, or do anything else it imagines to be in the best interests of "humanity," "humankind," "the future," or whatever other abstraction it has fixed upon. It is precisely because the managerial elite has succeeded in liberating itself and the societies it dominates from the provincialism of traditional societies that it is so dangerous and so inclined to tyranny—and so susceptible to penetration and manipulation by well-organized ethnic minorities that retain strong identities.

But is it a "ruling class" or merely a gang of "strategic elites"? A ruling class, as the term is conventionally used in sociology, is usually more hereditary than the managerial elite seems to be, but aside from that characteristic, a ruling class is mainly distinguished by its unity and its ability to make its interests prevail over those of rival elites. The unity of an elite is usually established though its ideology—the ideas, beliefs, and values it shares that help identify its interests and justify the elite's pursuit of them. In the case of the managerial elite, what has been known in the United States since the New Deal era as "liberalism" has served as the main managerial ideology, while what used to be known as "conservatism" served as the main political ideology of the old, declining, and now largely defunct bourgeois elite. As the bourgeois elite ceased to exist, its ideology became irrelevant, and neoconservatism, an updated version of conservatism that explicitly defends managerial interests and values, replaced it. Managerial liberalism reflects the values of universalism and scientism and offers clear rationalizations for the "progressive," "scientific," "enlightened," and "cosmopolitan" managerial class in its struggle for social and political power against the "backward," "repressive," and "provincial" bourgeoisie.

Between the New Deal and the Reagan administration, the dominance of the increasingly unified managerial class and its ideology was indeed challenged and balanced to some degree by bourgeois conservatism, which still flourished outside the nation's metropolitan areas and still commanded both large material resources and considerable human loyalty. By the 1980's, however, the bourgeois elite was spent, its economic interests largely dependent on the managerial economy, and its cultural values and codes the objects of contempt and even sanctions by managerial liberals and (perhaps more important) the new managerial right called "neoconservatives." Not only does the managerial class constitute a unified and dominant ruling class, but, well beyond that, it is also approaching exactly what Gaetano Mosca, one of the main architects of the modern theory of elites, had warned against: "The absolute preponderance of a single political force" as an "essential element in any type of despotism." While the old bourgeois elite was too decentralized and limited in its power and reach to hold monolithic social and political hegemony, the managerial class does, and what we are now witnessing is the managerial obliteration of whatever remnants of bourgeois freedom and culture still exist and the managerial regimentation of social differences—rationalized by the new managerial codeword, "diversity."

The idea that "strategic elites" check and balance each other and coexist—in the same kind of bucolic amity that Mr. Brooks' "jocks" and "nerds" enjoy or in the harmony that obtains between the ebony and ivory on Stevie Wonder's piano keyboard—is not only wrong but is a deliberately fostered managerial delusion. As long as the ruling class can convince its subjects that it doesn't really exist at all and that the elites that do exist are merely distinct and separate groups that compete against one another, it can preserve the illusion that something like freedom continues to thrive. Like most ruling classes, however, it can fool its subjects only so long before the truth about who really rules them and what remains of their country smacks them in the face. c

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by Scott P. Richert

Giuseppe Sure Knows How To Live

The train winds its way slowly through the Tuscan countryside, stopping at every small station between Siena and Florence. I don't mind, because Tuscany in mid-March is like Rockford in mid- to late-May—an explosion of greenery, a profusion of brilliant yellow forsythia blossoms, a cavalcade of white and pink cherries in full bloom. We pass small vineyards and larger orchards, the awakening vines and trees planted along rustic supports on both steep and gently sloping hillsides. As we pass through each little town, I can't help but notice the robust kitchen gardens, where chickens often wander among the mustard greens, some of which have already flowered. In our week in Tuscany, temperatures have ranged from the low 40's at night to the low 70's during the day—perfect weather for spring greens and for planting.

The dulcet tones of Alice Drennan's voice draw me out of my reverie: "What do you think will be growing in Rockford when we get back?" "Nothing," I reply, and I immediately regret the sharpness and shortness of my response. Mrs. Drennan, a delightful 70-something widow from the south side of Chicago who is on her first Rockford Institute convivium, protests. "When we left, my bulbs were just starting to come up." Mine, too, though only on the south side of the house, where the soil is warmed by the sun and the reflection off of the pale-yellow stucco. What I had simply meant was that the first day of spring, when we will return, is usually too early for any real growth. But my tone had betrayed a certain envy, motivated, at best, by my wish that I could be out in my own garden by mid-March, and, more likely, by a touch of the disloyalty that Tom Fleming has been railing against as we have moved from Pisa, to Siena, and now to Florence—measuring all other places through the rose-colored glasses of our latest infatuation.

For me, however, the high point of this convivium has been Siena, with its hills and late-medieval charm, but it was the first day in Pisa that moved me to these thoughts, as Tom, his wife, Gail, and I walked through an open-air market in a series of alleys off of the Borgo Stredo. Here, where trash cans and wastrels would be tucked away in an American city, a dozen vendors peddle fruits and vegetables, each stall displaying a range of produce that entire American farmers' markets couldn't reproduce. The overpowering scent of basil and perfectly ripened tomatoes—Romas and medium-sized variegated varieties similar to Brandywines, more green and pink than red, but no Beefsteaks—fills the air. Behind the stalls, shops no larger than my office are tucked into the walls of the alley, with glass-front cases displaying massive cuts of marbled beef, pork loins, lamb, whole rabbits, and golden chickens. Other shops offer aged parmagiano reggiano, pecorino, and other hard and soft cheeses by the *etto* (100 grams). Wine shops offer an astounding selection by keeping their display of each variety to two or three bottles. The walls of virtually every store are lined with cured hams the size of an Italian subcompact, bags of pasta in every imaginable shape, and baskets of dried porcini.

While we do not buy anything, it still takes us close to half an hour to walk through the market. Stopping in front of a *pasticceria* to admire the fresh-baked bread and the *panforte*, a 13th-century Sienese confection filled with almonds, dried fruit, and spices, I say, to no one in particular, "It must be wonderful to be able to shop in a market like this." An American tourist, passing by, stops me cold when she replies: "I haven't seen anything I couldn't get in my hometown." She must be very lucky, I tell her, because I couldn't find this variety of goods, and certainly not this quality, in all of Rockford, a city of 150,000 (half again the size of Pisa) that sits square in the middle of some of the best farmland in America. She has heard of Rockford, and she laughs scornfully: "That's why I would never live there."

The scene comes back to me as I ponder my reply to Mrs. Drennan, and I realize that the edge in my voice was not there because I despise Rockford (as the American tourist does) nor because I wish that Rockford were more like Pisa. Instead, I wish that Rockford were more like Rockford—like the Rockford that used to exist before Rockford College and "business leaders" and politicians abandoned downtown, and Wal-Mart and every other chain under the sun gobbled up the farmland on the outskirts of the city. I wish that Rockford were more like the Rockford that used to exist back when America was still America—more rural than urban, more regional than centralized, more free than not.

I don't regret not being able to buy a vine-ripened tomato in Rockford in mid-March; the climate of Tuscany (and points farther south in Italy) makes for a longer growing season than in the American Midwest. What I do regret, however, is not being able to buy a vine-ripened tomato during August. Because Americans refuse to content themselves during the off-season with home-canned tomatoes or dried Romas packed in olive oil or thin slices preserved in salt in crocks (or, even, doing without) and, instead, demand "fresh" tomatoes year-round, we are offered, year-round, tomatoes picked green off of Mexican vines and chemically "ripened" on semis on their way to the Rural Street Kroger and the Charles Street Schnucks. As historian John Lukacs often points out, inflation is a phenomenon that affects more than money, and the ever-present tomato is virtually worthless (though not, of course, free).

Today, if Americans want to eat as well as Italians, they must grow their own vegetables, raise their own meat (or find someone to raise it for them), and bake their own bread. Those are all worthwhile endeavors, but when you can no longer purchase a salt-encrusted ham from a grocer who is also your neighbor and fellow citizen (if not necessarily a friend), something has been lost. The way to a man's heart, the saw goes, is through his stomach; what if the saying applies to cities as well as women? c

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Letter From Milan

by Andrei Navrozov

The Book of Italian Excuses

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A decade ago, Celeste Dell'Anna, to this day the only interior designer in Milan with a world reputation and a beautiful wife, was doing our new house in Knightsbridge. We became great friends, initially because I appreciated the tragic spectacle of this man of culture being baited, like some great white stag personifying the Italian rococo, by a pack of London builders who seemed to have been disgorged by Tolkien's subterranean regions. Some were dwarves, others impossibly gaunt; some had warts, others long hair the color of pigsty straw; some spoke not at all, others were full of palaver; but the one thing all these barbarians had in common was the kind of sylvan, northern, autistic stupidity that is now the chief distinguishing characteristic of the socially displaced and the ethically disenfranchised.

A pupil of the legendary maximalist Renzo Mongiardino, Celeste went on to design yacht, airplane, and helicopter interiors for the Agustas, for the Aga Khan, and for the king of Spain. But this was his first job in England. Long used to reconciling the conflicting demands of space, personality, and skill, he valiantly tried to suppress the dawning realization that he was no longer in St. Moritz, that none of his fancy footwork now mattered, and that this time round, in the suitably rustic idiom of the Russian proverb, the scythe had hit a stone. The technical sketches he executed in brown chalk on the stripped yet evermore grimy walls of Victorian hallways and cloakrooms looked more plausible than Renaissance inventions, and each possessed the charm of a museum Watteau; but the ulotrichous workmen either ignored them, to make time for their off-track bets and their electric tea kettles, or plastered them over with copies of the *Sun*, their window on the enchanted Thule of bestially guiltless leisure where the woman's breast was always a size larger than the footballer's head.

In the evenings, I drank with Celeste, who had come to accept that alcohol was less unaesthetic than anesthetic, and while at times a symptom of barbarism, always an antidote to some of its more unsettling effects. When thus tranquilized, Celeste would invariably try to persuade me to write a book about the experiences we were living, advice I could have done worse than followed. He insisted that I should entitle it *The End of the Day*, as this was the phrase, beloved of every stratum of the proletariat in Britain, that he had come to loathe and fear most. To him, *Workers of all nations, unite!* or *Avanti, popolo, alla riscossa!* were history's dusty abstractions, but whenever he heard an unwashed plumber tell him that "A' th' end o' the dai, Mr. Delfini, it won' maik much o' a diff'rins if the wa'ah mine *does* run down, 'cos iss *beige* innit, same's the wall gonna buy," he would tremble in incomprehension and terror like a French nobleman in view of the scaffold. And when, at the end of the day, his own workmen from Bergamo finally arrived to finish the decoration and I saw their thoughtful faces, their identical, crisply pressed blue overalls, and their tools neatly arranged in mahogany cases, I too felt ennobled and ever so slightly guillotined. They worked like Sisyphus, chivalrously insensible of the truth that imposing their precious superstructure on the rude base left behind by the troglodytes of the north was as inutile as raising a marble bust on a plinth of cardboard.

Years have passed. I have become godfather to Celeste's son. London is now only a gambler's memory, selective, capricious, and blind to the ruinous distinction between last week's big loss and last year's big win. The other night, we drank together again, this time at his studio in Milan, and as I regaled him with my stories of apartment hunting in Venice and house restoration in Palermo, he again chided me for not having written about our London experiences. He wanted to know what sort of book I might be thinking of these days, now that I had come to live in his country. I joked that the bestseller the world really craves at the moment is *How to Live Well on $1 Million a Year*, for the simple reason that those with the means to make themselves manifestly unhappy are so bad at mastering them. But then it occurred to me that there was, in fact, a variant of *The End of the Day* that was relevant to my present condition.

This would be called *The Book of Italian Excuses and Lies*. Neither Celeste nor I ever supposed that *The End of the Day* would become some sort of diatribe against the national character of the inhabitants of Britain, and we accepted that no treatise on hygiene, no diachronic study of climate, and no history of education could ever explain the shocking fact that British workmen wear no underwear. Similarly, in this book, I would not tackle the larger generalities—such as the really shocking fact that just about every Italian, of whatever age, believes that his country fought on the winning side in World War II—concentrating instead on the quotidian of small evasions and white lies, the fibbing, mercurial, hypochondriacal continuum of men's private lives in which the Italian character comes to the fore.

A few days ago, I went into a shop to ask if they had any pickled gherkins, and I want to give the owner's reply verbatim. "Pickled gherkins *as such* I do not have at the moment," he said with the dignified deliberation that one always finds so becoming in a shopkeeper, "but I do have pickled capers, which is a kind of gherkin, only a little smaller and rounder." My laughter offended him: "You will not find the *other kind* in any shop, sir," he said haughtily, "but if you insist I can always ask the wholesaler if we can have that"—I was sure he had something rude like "*porcheria*" on the tip of his tongue—"specially ordered for you." For the morality of much Italian lying is predicated on the ready offense to be taken at the slightest suggestion that one is not telling the truth, an attitude that, at least to the Russian Orthodox eye of my housekeeper, makes even ordinary law-abiding Italians akin to horse-thieving Gypsies.

The attitude goes well with the ubiquitous persona that may be called the *cavaliere servente*—it is not for nothing, after all, that Italy is famous for her lovers—who first woos and swoons, then yawns and switches off his portable. Ubiquitous, I say, because the spirit of the distracted lover holds sway over the behavior

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of the architect and the lawyer, the hospitable host and the polite guest, the promising politician and the enthusiastic voter. In the morning, the man of the moment is full of exquisite dreams, and it seems he can think of nothing besides his new mistress, his new vocation, or his new plan; come afternoon, neither inviting this nor aware that it contravenes his earlier state of mind, he suddenly feels himself drawn to some other object of interest glistening in the middle distance, be it a splendid racecar in a magazine advertisement or a jeweled collar round the neck of a passing poodle; come evening, he feels weary of it all, and besides he has a chest cold coming on, or else the clams have disagreed with him. *Lascia perdere*, he mutters ruefully, to hell with all those women, plans, and dogs; I am going to call my mother and then have myself a nice cup of camomile tea.

Hence the malingering for which the nation is famous. Walk into any Italian pharmacy, and you will find yourself in the town's most fashionable salon, where everyone is a grandee (though some are grander than the rest) and where the social competition turns on the issue of just whose diseases are more evanescent. The butcher's daughter feels that she has a sore on her cheek that could lead to complications, and the beauty of it is that the sore is *invisible*; five minutes of discussion. Not to be bested by a mere butcher's daughter, the chartered accountant's brother complains of a *constriction* in his lungs, one that, moreover, he experiences only at Carnival time; five minutes of animated discussion, followed by the purchase of vitamin capsules. Then an unknown lady in a voluminous fur coat, holding her own against all comers, announces that she simply has not been *well*; ten minutes of highly animated discussion, with the pharmacist coming out from behind the counter to make more elbow space for philosophical expostulation. By lunchtime closing, everyone who matters in society—that is to say, everyone who is truly delicate—has been gravely ill and miraculously cured.

This, after all, is the aboriginal Catholic country, where the wind blows where it list. Here, cause and effect are not linked with that scientific rigor or that banal literalism that has made Northern Europe what it is at the end of the day, namely, honest yet ugly, straight yet plain, educated yet stupid, rational yet credulous, efficient yet shoddy, heated yet cold, consistent yet discontented. And the funny thing is that, of course, you *can* be in two places at the same time, if you are an Italian lover, saint, or plumber; and if, like the sweet little *bambino* you were born, you are the apple of your mother's eye, you can easily be at once sick and well; while to any lawyer your case is both A and not-A, and *lasciamo perdere* the excluded middle; and besides, who is to say that you cannot be a talented painter one day and decide to grow *radicchio di Treviso* the next?

For the freedom to sin, which presupposes the telling of lies, and to repent, which condones the invention of excuses, is the supernatural, perennial, adamantine fabric that lines the motley and threadbare robe that is the Italian character. I am quite sure that the book I could write on the subject, *The Book of Italian Excuses and Lies*, would make that character even more of a laughingstock than it already is the world over. But the memory of Celeste's art and his workmen from Bergamo chastens the incorrigible mocker, the faint outline of the cathedral on the far side of the cynic's wineglass makes him lose heart, and the trusting approach of barefooted Mediterranean spring makes the satyr's harp fall soundless to the ground.

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

Letter From Chile

by Mary Kohler

A Road Too Far?

◆

I awoke again this morning to an entirely clear sky. It is cold early in the morning in late summer in the mountains of South Chile, about 45 degrees. We are suffering through a very long dry spell. There has been no significant rain for over two months, and the clear sky is mostly obliterated by heavy smoke.

The two forest fires, *incendios*, are fortunately on the other side of the Puelo, a wide, fast river flowing right in front of our cabin door. We would never be allowed to build here, so close to the river, at home. This might be a wise restriction, because some year, before too long, the river is going to take the land, cabin and all, in a spring flood.

With the government budget for the helicopter with the water bucket having been exceeded and a neighbor endangered by one of the fires, the firefighters, axes, pumps, shovels, sleeping bags, potatoes, flour, and a watermelon arrived at our airstrip by Twin Otter and were ferried nearer the fire by my husband and the neighbor, who own the only two motorboats on this part of the river.

Downstream from us lies a canyon, not navigable; upstream, another canyon, even more wild; beyond that, Argentina. The "road" behind our house leads past a few farms, the nearest a 25-minute walk, to a rowboat ferry across the river and on to another airstrip, a school, a few houses, and a radio-phone. By foot, it is perhaps five or six hours; by horse much less to Llanada Grande, this "town."

This year, it is still a three-day trip by horse, more or less, to the auto road. But progress is coming. They are working on the road all the way to Llanada Grande and have built the bridge over the Rio Manso. The ferry's in place to cross Lago Tagua Tagua, five miles long and impossible to walk around, where the mountains come down directly to the deep, turquoise-colored lake.

I suppose this is one of the last, mostly isolated, remaining farmed areas. The cash crop is beef, shipped on the hoof most of the way to market. That happened some weeks ago this year, when the lower pastures dried up. The hill pastures are small, and even they are barely green. The clear skies and sun raise the afternoon temperatures into the 80's—sometimes into the 90's, in a *puelche* when the hot, dry wind comes from the pampas of Argentina.

Most of the farmers are self-subsisting, needing only flour and oil from the city. From their farms come sheep and goats, apples, plums, and cherries, potatoes—wonderful potatoes—and a few vegetables. They can the cherries and make the apples and plums into *chiche*, a very hard version of hard cider. When they tire of the menu, the kids go to the river with a lure and a monofilament wound around a can.

Everyone can obtain running water by placing a hose in a nearby mountain stream—in our case, a quarter-mile away—and presto, cold, clear water runs all day, sometimes into the bucket of laundry. We have other handy amenities; they mostly do not.

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We city slickers also have imported from the city by air, in the form of gasoline for a generator, electricity—enough to keep a refrigerator/freezer cold and to operate a washing machine for our clothes. The dryer, however, is semiautomatic and consists of lines between two posts.

So, since resupply happens at most once a week, we must know how to make bread, chop wood for the stove, find our way around in the dark, and walk. All of the locals—women, men, and boys—make bread, and they all ride horses. We don't have a horse.

Life is hard, but life is fun. Big bets are placed on the horse races held on our airstrip; neighbors gather together for an *asado* (roast lamb or goat) with boiled potatoes, boxed wine, and *chiche*, and if anyone has been to town, *ensalada Chilena*.

The firefighters have left, but the fires are still burning, one furiously. The houses are safe, at least for a while. Perhaps after the high pressure is gone in three or four more days, it might rain. We have asked our friends in the States to pray for rain for us; one deacon even announced it during the service.

Will it be good to have a road? That depends on what we and our neighbors believe is good. Is freedom from most oversight good? Sometimes. Sometimes it is bad, when the fires start and no one in the city cares. But once the road comes, life here will never be the same, just as it is not the same in the American Midwest as it was in times past. Perhaps that is why we come here.

Mary Kohler is the vice chairman of the board of directors of The Rockford Institute.

Letter From Texas

by Wayne Allensworth

The Next Sound You Hear

◆

We've crammed the Suburban with about as many people as it can carry, driving the fenceline on a section of land not far from Meridian, Texas, on a cool Sunday afternoon during deer season. My brother left a message even before we made it home from church, asking us to come with his family to check out this piece of property. I didn't bother to change, as we are to meet the seller in a couple of hours, and I look a little incongruous in my Sunday best next to my brother, who is wearing a black Stetson and boots, and the seller, wearing a cap dressed up as the Lone Star flag of my native state and a plaid, pearl-buttoned shirt.

All I can hear is the kids' breathing in my ear and the soft murmuring of the Suburban's motor. We are waiting for the flock of turkeys to crest the rise in front of us. My brother pushes back the Stetson from his forehead, quietly making a count of the flock.

He counts 25 before something alarms them and they take off into the brush, bordered by a stand of live oaks and pecan trees, near the driver's side of the lumbering SUV. We never heard the sound that spooked them—or maybe it was movement.

My brother shifts the Suburban into four-wheel drive, and we crest the steep rise and head for the big tank in the center of the property. I roll the window down and try to block out the voices and the sound of the motor's humming, listening to the stillness.

That's what I remember most. The stillness. And the silence. And the pitch-blackness of my grandparent's place, so far off the blacktop between Bryan and Waco. And the stars that decorated the sky like a coat of shimmering silver dust. We carried flashlights on our morning and evening hunts, as the deep well of country darkness made it so difficult to traverse the trails, even when the moon was up.

My grandfather kept a heavy flashlight near the screen door in case anybody had to brave the winter chill and inky blackness to answer nature's call at the outhouse.

Sometimes, I would take the flashlight and go off—keeping to the trail to avoid bull nettle—and turn the light off, just to disappear into the darkness and watch the sky. Sound carried so far out there that I could still hear muffled noises echoing from the cabin, which stood on cinder blocks so that it shook when you walked across the floor in your boots.

When Pawps—my grandfather—and Daddy first built that cabin, there was no running water, no electricity, no TV—and no noise. Even then, the city was encroaching on our home in greater Houston. The roads were paved, and the traffic was growing steadily heavier. And the sounds we didn't notice—the lawn mowers and cars and trucks and TVs—had already dulled our senses, robbing us of the pleasure of pure, unfiltered, natural sensation.

When my grandparents had to sell that place, it was like a death in the family.

It was almost intoxicating to feel that heightened sensational awareness in the country, so I try to recreate those singular moments we all experience at one time or another, to capture that sense of life again. But I can't. Everybody is talking again, and the damn motor makes too much noise. Roll the window up, it's cold in here!

When did I hunt last? It has been several years, around Christmastime. I am home, so my younger brother and I set out for the country. We only have time for an evening and morning hunt, and then we will have to go.

That evening, I take the stand in the oat patch, while my brother heads for the big tank. I don't see anything other than a mess of black hogs passing through the clearing and a cardinal perching on my stand, so I sit back and enjoy the still, cold air, looking for movement in the creeping shadows.

But there is nothing there.

It's almost dark when I meet my brother at the fenceline, and we begin the hike back to the cabin. Then, up ahead on the trail, something moves. Slowly, with a liquid viscosity of barely perceptible movement, a shape emerges from the woods and halts, eyeing us carefully. Then the shape takes form as a large bobcat, squatting down on its hind legs, pointy ears reaching for the darkening sky. Neither of us heard a sound.

Then it is gone. My brother, who had raised his rifle when he sensed the movement ahead of us, slings the .30-06 onto his shoulder. Well, he says, it would have cost too much to mount. We both agree that we wouldn't want to have shot the bobcat anyhow.

That's not what we came for.

It's near full dark, and the stars are already beginning to show.

Wayne Allensworth, who resides in Keller, Texas, is trying to talk his brother into buying their grandfather's property.

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by Srdja Trifkovic

Milosevic on Trial

There are contests in which a decent person prefers not to take sides, such as the bloody wars between Mafia families or Stalin's disputes with Trotsky and Tito. The war between Khomeini's Iran and Saddam's Iraq also comes to mind, or the family feud between Pol Pot and the Vietnamese communists. It is tempting to put Slobodan Milosevic's contest with the inquisitors at The Hague War Crimes Tribunal in the same category, but the temptation should be resisted. This trial is a travesty of justice that goes beyond the personal and political flaws of any one man. British writer and commentator John Laughland ("This is not justice," the *Guardian*, February 16) noted that the inquisitors at The Hague are falsely trying to present the Yugoslav tribunal as the heir to Nuremberg, in the hope that "a quick reference to Hitler" can settle the problem that "the Hague tribunal was created in 1993 by the UN security council, a body which has as little right to set up a court as it does to raise taxes":

> The rigorous sovereignist logic of the Nuremberg tribunal was clearly spelled out in its charter. Indeed, the Nuremberg tribunal, unlike the Hague tribunal, was not really an international tribunal at all. The judges quite specifically stated that the act of promulgating the Nuremberg charter was "the exercise of the sovereign legislative power of the countries to which the German Reich unconditionally surrendered". There was no pretence that the "international community" was prosecuting the Germans. Indeed, when other countries asked to be allowed to participate in the Nuremberg trial, the allies told them to mind their own business.

The Nuremberg judges, Laughland continued, also had an overriding philosophical reason for insisting on state sovereignty as the principal legal foundation for peace, namely, that the Nazis themselves had contested it: Like today's globalists, the Nazis argued that circumstances had changed, granting great powers the right to interfere in the internal affairs of smaller nations within their sphere of influence. This spirit was faithfully reflected on June 13, 2000, when Carla Del Ponte, the chief prosecutor at The Hague, refused to open an investigation into NATO's war crimes in Yugoslavia on the grounds that that the tribunal "does not have jurisdiction over crimes against peace":

> Nato [*sic*] turned itself from an organisation committed to defending the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of its members into a worldwide police force with an effectively unlimited mandate. By refusing to prosecute Nato [*sic*], the Hague has given all this its tacit legal approval. . . . The world has therefore moved from an international system based on a multiplicity of sovereignties to one in which some states are more equal than others. And the Nuremberg jurisprudence of peace has been abandoned in favour of the Hague's decision to award—to the powerful western states at least—a licence to kill.

"Before the travesty is over," wrote Don Feder in *Jewish World Review* concerning Milosevic's trial a few weeks before it finally began ("West haunted by Balkans blunder," December 3, 2001), "[Milosevic] will doubtless be convicted of running the rail line to Auschwitz." The tone was dictated by Del Ponte, who spoke of the "medieval savagery" of the alleged crimes. However, as "Peter Simple" noted in the *Daily Telegraph* (February 15),

> For those who work for that mysterious entity, the 'International Community', and gather at the Bar of World Opinion, the word 'medieval' is a common term of abuse. Is medieval savagery, perpetuated by identifiable people caught up in the bloodthirsty frenzy of civil war, worse than modern savagery, in which people are targeted by mathematical calculation and blown to bits by bombs dropped from a height of 50,000 feet by anonymous airmen?

These objections are no less valid when raised by Slobodan Milosevic. At least they are being heard, and the world is taking notice. In fact, by the fourth day of the trial, UPI grudgingly conceded (February 17) that "it has to be admitted by any objective observer that [Milosevic] has scored some telling points so far in his first unfettered presentation to the court":

> His attacks on NATO and grim photographs showing the results of the air bombardment of Serbia were horrific. His repeated attacks on the legitimacy of the U.N. International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia have begun to shake public confidence in it. . . . [Del Ponte] is criticized by diplomats following the trial for a cavalier style that is suspected of papering over serious cracks in the prosecution's case.

Milosevic has refused to recognize Carla Del Ponte's "court," and his decision to represent himself turned out to be a stroke of genius. However, as Milosevic began to mount a credible defense, demolishing a series of false witnesses, the media coverage of the trial grew thinner. Stella Jatras ("The Case of the Invisible Trial," *www.antiwar.com/orig/jatras8.html*, March 7) wondered why the trial, heralded as "the most important . . . since Nuremberg," was not carried by a single one of the 100 TV channels on her dial:

> Curious, since for the past ten years the media and the major TV chan-

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nels couldn't wait to spin all the sordid details of mutilations, murders, torture and charges of genocide that . . . Milosevic, faces at The Hague's Stalinist show trial. . . . Why then has the media ignored it? Can it be because of the inept prosecution of the trial? Can it be that the "heinous criminal, Milosevic," with only the use of a public pay phone and acting as his own lawyer from his 9 by 15 foot jail cell, is making fools of the international tribunal? Can it be that, since his guilt is a foregone conclusion, it wouldn't do for the public to see how weak the case is against him?

Thomas Fleming has underscored this weakness ("Hague Tribunal and *Chicago Tribune* Taken in by Hoaxters," *Chronicles Extra!*, *www.ChroniclesMagazine.org*, March 1), focusing on the testimony of an Albanian from Kosovo named Halit Barani. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Barani provided "one of the most chilling pieces of evidence introduced"—a list of Albanians to be liquidated by the Serb police. But Milosevic turned the tables on his accuser, charging him with presenting to the court a falsified document riddled with the kind of grammatical and spelling errors that Albanians (but not Serbs) typically make. What Milosevic did not know, Fleming points out, is that Barani was the subject of a major story on December 31, 1999, when the *Wall Street Journal* ran a front-page article debunking his credibility:

> The title is chillingly relevant to the current trial: "War in Kosovo Was Cruel, Bitter, Savage; Genocide it Wasn't." The subtitle is equally telling, especially in the case of Barani's testimony: "Tales of Mass Atrocity Arose And Were Passed Along, Often With Little Proof." This same Mr. Barani had accused the Yugoslav government of murdering Albanian civilians and stuffing their bodies into the Trepca mine shaft. "Mr. Barani," commented the *Journal*'s reporters dryly, ". . . spent the war moving from village to village with his manual typewriter, calling in reports to foreign radio services and diplomats with his daily allotment of three minutes on a KLA satellite phone." His "eye-witness accounts" of these atrocities were spread around the world, and the Kosovo authorities even quoted a "U.S. embassy official in Athens as saying there are witnesses and still photos of trucks carrying bodies. Western journalists phoned the embassy, but a spokeswoman said she couldn't find the supposed source."

Reporters Daniel Pearl and Robert Block debunked Barani's hoax, arguing that even "Mr. Barani doesn't completely stand by his story. 'I told everybody it was supposition, it was not confirmed information,' he says. But he adds, 'For the Serbs, everything is possible.'" Fleming concludes:

> Mr. Barani's credulity is easily explained by his zeal to establish an Albanian state. What explains the credulity displayed by the *Chicago Tribune* and the AP wire, which ran a similar story? In reporting on The Hague Tribunal, "stating a theory as a fact" has become standard practice. Only days earlier, these people were singing the praises of Daniel Pearl, a real reporter, who lost his life trying to get the facts of a story . . . Instead of eulogizing Pearl, they should be emulating him.

That is not too likely, says Charley Reese ("Milosevic in a kangaroo court," February 20, *www.enterprise-journal.com/NF/omf/ejournal/calendar.html*). Journalists emulating a true professional would consider the fact that "Milosevic is charged with genocide" and ask,

> What group of people who previously existed in Yugoslavia no longer exists? Nobody. Everybody who was there is still there, give or take a few thousand casualties of war, or is living elsewhere.
>
> He is also charged with crimes against humanity. I'd like to know, as a member of humanity, which human being Milosevic harmed outside the war zone. We, after all, have killed more Iraqis than the people the Serbs killed in any of the groups they fought. Genocide and crimes against humanity are Orwellian terms so vague that they are impossible to define rationally. They are an excuse used by the victors to wreak vengeance on the losers. You can be sure that no leader of a powerful nation with an intact army will ever be charged with genocide or crimes against humanity, no matter what he does.

Congressman Ron Paul (R-TX) noted at a congressional hearing on international tribunals (March 2) that the idea of "international justice" is as bad for America as it is for the rest of the world:

> [T]oday it is Milosevic but tomorrow it could be any of us . . . Thus far, the prosecution has attempted to bring as witnesses people who are on the payroll of the tribunal itself . . . Other witnesses have turned out to have been members of the Kosovo Liberation Army . . . Remember, Milosevic was extradited for Kosovo and for Kosovo only, but the weakness of the case forced the Court to add other charges in other countries. Now, after Milosevic has shown himself adept at cross-examination, the prosecution is seeking to have the judge limit Milosevic's ability to cross-examine the prosecution's witnesses.

Slobodan Milosevic is doubtless guilty of many things, for which he should be tried by his own long-suffering people. He is not, however, guilty of any "genocide" in the former Yugoslavia. He is not guilty of a criminal conspiracy to create a "greater Serbia." He is not the sole cause of "three wars" in the former Yugoslavia. These conflicts were the results of forces outside of his control. Milosevic will be found guilty and sentenced, of course. He deserves to languish in jail. But Scheveningen is the wrong jail, and The Hague, the wrong court. C

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THE OLD REPUBLIC

The Habitation of Justice

by Stephen B. Presser

Judge Roy Moore, chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, is in big trouble again. Judge Moore's first 15 minutes of fame happened when, as a lower-court judge, he refused to remove a plaque containing the Ten Commandments from the wall of his courtroom. The plaque, it was said, amounted to an impermissible establishment of religion and could not be tolerated in a public building. One court did order the judge to give up his Commandments, but he refused, arguing that, since our country's system of justice was, ultimately, based on the Ten Commandments, it was perfectly appropriate to recognize them in a courtroom. Judge Moore went on to capitalize on his notoriety by winning a seat on Alabama's highest court.

The latest flap concerning Moore comes as a result of a concurring opinion he published in a recent 9-0 decision affirming a trial court's denial to a lesbian of physical custody of her three children. At the time that her divorce was granted, the woman, a Californian, shared joint legal custody with the father and had primary physical custody of the kids, but she later petitioned the California courts to modify the custody arrangement in order to give physical custody to the father, who subsequently moved to Alabama. She desired this change, apparently, in order for her to pursue a same-sex relationship without the children getting in the way. The California courts granted the father physical custody, and the children moved to Alabama. Some years later, the mother changed her mind and, in a new quest for physical custody, argued, principally, that the father was too strict a disciplinarian. Her new petition for custody was filed with the California courts, but the father succeeded in getting the matter transferred to the Alabama court.

Some evidence suggested that the children preferred to move back to California to be with their mother and her same-sex lover, and the father may have administered corporal punishment to at least one of the children and kicked the boom box of another. Indeed, the trial court, concluding that the father should ease up in his discipline, ordered him to attend "parenting classes," but the court also found that the circumstances had not changed since the father was first awarded custody, and thus there was no legal reason to change the arrangement. An Alabama appellate court, however, reversed the trial court's order on the grounds that the father's strict discipline amounted to "abuse" of the children and that the mother's homosexuality was no impediment to custody.

In a short opinion for the unanimous Supreme Court, one of Judge Moore's colleagues pointed out that there is no clearer procedural rule of law than that the weighing of facts is a function of the trial court, not the appellate court. Thus, if the Alabama trial court, taking everything into consideration and having had the opportunity to observe the demeanor of the witnesses, had thought that custody still belonged with the father, no appellate court could reverse that factual determination. Judge Moore, in a concurring opinion, indicated his view that the law of Alabama deemed a homosexual couple presumptively unfit to be given custody of children. He referred extensively to prior Alabama decisions that had indicated the inappropriateness of homosexual relationships by quoting from a plethora of sources including the Bible and Blackstone, and he noted their observations that homosexuality was "an abomination," a "crime against nature," and so forth. Judge Moore did not present any of this as his own view, except possibly for one sentence where he wrote, without specific reference to Alabama law, that homosexual conduct "was an inherent evil, against which children must be protected." Still, the views the judge espoused were not really his but the prevailing holdings of prior judicial decisions in Alabama. Thus, he noted, the Alabama appellate court was wrong. The granting of physical custody to the father by the California courts had been appropriate, and so was the Alabama trial court's refusal to set that decision aside.

Nevertheless, Judge Moore's critics, who undoubtedly did not carefully examine the opinions in the case, went ballistic and called for his ouster. Lorri L. Jean, the executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, bleated that

> It is appalling to see that blatant bigotry and unrepentant ignorance reign supreme in Alabama's highest court. Chief Justice Moore has decreed that his personal religious beliefs will now be the law of the land in Alabama. This violates the constitutional mandate of separation of church and state, and it renders him unfit to serve as a judge.

Moore had done nothing like that, though it is true that the current constitutional status of sexual preference is somewhat murky. The U.S. Supreme Court, our ultimate expositor of these matters, has ruled that state sodomy statutes that condemn and punish homosexual relationships do not violate the Constitution. It has also ruled, however, that a state constitution cannot be amended in a manner that prohibits municipalities from forbidding discrimination based on sexual preference.

The prevailing view in the legal academy and, of course, in the media is that your choice of sexual preference or practice ought not count against you in any forum, but Judge Moore chose puckishly to remind us that politically correct doctrine is something different from law. Indeed, Justice Moore's judicial philosophy is that the Constitution and laws must be interpreted according to their understanding *when they were adopted*. Thus, since the common law and the Constitution were promulgated in a nation committed to Judeo-Christian notions of morality, it is appropriate that some legal and judicial deference be afforded to traditional views, some incorrect decisions of the federal courts notwithstanding.

No matter what Judge Moore personally believes about homosexuals, and no matter how politically incorrect he is, he is certainly right about the law—about the need to draw distinctions between popular opinion and politics, on the one hand, and the dictates of precedent, on the other. (In his concurring opinion,

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Judge Moore stated that "Judges should not make decisions based on the latest psychological or sociological study or statistical poll," indicating his belief that prior law should govern). He does not deserve the scorn and the contempt that his critics and their sympathizers in the national media love to lavish upon him. He is a man of honor committed to the rule of law. God bless him.

Stephen B. Presser is the legal-affairs editor for Chronicles.

THE NEW REPUBLIC

A "Containment Policy" for the New Cold War

by Donald W. Livingston

Americans regularly accept expropriations—legal, moral, and economic—from the central government that would have driven our 18th- and 19th-century ancestors to arms. The Constitution reserves to the states and local communities all powers necessary to provide legal protection for valuable ways of life. These rights have been usurped by the central government, especially by the Supreme Court, which has—absurdly—become the most important social policy-making body in the Union. As a result, the states are no longer genuine *political societies* but mere administrative units of the center. This concentration of power has been seized by a ruling class that is deeply hostile to traditional American society. Well into the 1960's, it was publicly acknowledged that America was a Christian society—that Christianity is the source of its fundamental law and its dominant culture. Religion was not expelled from the public square because states and local communities changed their constitutions and statutes to drive Christianity to the margin of society (as they had a constitutional right to do if they chose), but because the Supreme Court prohibited prayer in public schools. The Court did not ban prayers from the Oval Office, or from Congress, or from its own chambers—only from public schools financed by local tax dollars. The great majority of statutes declared unconstitutional by the Court are acts of states and municipalities. The Court rarely takes on the other branches of the central government, because the Court is a creature of that government.

Immigration and other policies of the central government, urged by our cultural elites, are making a minority of the European stock that built the fundamental institutions of America. Susan Sontag, a respected pundit among our ruling class, declares that the "white race is the cancer of human history." Crude racist declamations of this sort are heard regularly in the academy, and no one objects. President Clinton triumphantly predicted in a commencement speech at Portland State University that, by 2050, white Europeans would be a minority. Elsewhere, he admonished Americans on the need for a "great revolution . . . to prove that we literally can live without having a dominant European culture." Americans accept these insults and contemplate the disintegration of their culture with the resignation appropriate to acts of God. But this disintegration is the work of men in the central government, not of nature. In the 1960's, Congress radically altered our immigration laws to favor non-Europeans. In 1960, Americans of European ancestry accounted for 87 percent of the population. By 2050, they will be a minority. We were told in the 1960's that this change would not affect the character of our culture. Now we are told that a "revolution" in our consciousness is needed to reconcile us to our emerging status as a minority culture.

The universalist Enlightenment ideologies that created the modern unitary state, whether in their liberal or Marxist form, place no value on cultural inheritance. Usually, it is seen as an impediment to being a citizen of the world, or to advancing class struggle or human rights. Why have Americans offered no resistance to these assaults on their cultural inheritance? Part of the answer is simply that they no longer possess the *civic virtue* that resistance requires. Aristotle taught that virtue of any kind comes into being and is sustained only by practice and habit in a society of a certain kind. For a citizen to possess civic virtue, he must inhabit a society of human scale in which real issues concerning the human good can be decided through eloquent speech and persuasion. Such small societies, or federations of small societies, must have genuine sovereignty over their affairs. Enjoying such sovereignty and the habitual practice of it, people in communities of this kind are jealous of their corporate liberty and are no more likely to accept encroachments on it than they would on their families. Hobbes understood this and warned that a modern centralized state must eliminate or strictly control all independent social authorities, for they are a potent source of corporate resistance to central authority. He aptly called them "worms in the commonwealth."

The American colonies were made up of such "worms." They were composed of small Protestant communities, each retaining a high degree of sovereignty. When the British government embarked on a project of increased centralization, which required more resources from the colonies, they resisted. Such resistance was possible only because these were societies of human scale in which civic virtue could be exercised. The Constitution they formed provided legal protection for state and local sovereignty and, consequently, for continuance of the civic virtue that had secured their secession from Britain.

The Antifederalists warned that these protections were not sufficient and that the center would eventually consolidate the states and local communities into a unitary regime. The authors of the *Federalist* replied that this could never happen because the people had ample means to resist, by force if necessary. This held true for the first 70 years. Indeed, the central government was so contained that, from 1830 to 1860, it was virtually out of debt and imposed no inland taxes. It lived simply from a tariff on imports and land sales. State and local sovereignty flourished. Nobody ever saw a federal agent, except at the post office or customs house. When Southerners confronted the Northern industrial program of centralization—which demanded subsidies for Northern industry (paid by the South, which accounted for three fourths of federal revenue), a centralized currency (driving out state banks and subverting regional economies), and a high tariff that would destroy Southern exports—they voted in conventions of the people of their respective sovereign states, as their fathers a generation before had done, to secede and form a Union of their own. Article VII of the Constitution declares that the concurrence of nine states is sufficient to dissolve the Union under the Articles of Confederation and to form a Union of the nine states. If so,

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concurrence of 11 states in 1861 should have been sufficient to dissolve the Union of 1789 that, up to that time, had regularly been described as an "experiment."

The Lincoln administration, however, thought otherwise. The massive degree of centralization needed to destroy the Southern economy and force the states back into the Union was such that the federative polity of the Framers never recovered. Still, it would take a century before the states and local communities would be absorbed into the administration of the center. Today, it is no exaggeration to say that the United States is a totalitarian regime in the sense that the central government has usurped all sovereignty. There is, in principle, no area of life it cannot enter. That it chooses not to enter certain areas at present is merely a matter of prudence or inattention. The Supreme Court has set itself up as the final arbiter of the powers of the central government.

America is now governed by the self-defined limits of the central authority. In a mass society of 290 million, the civic virtue of resistance is impossible because the highly decentralized structure necessary for its exercise no longer exists. If a virtue cannot be exercised, it dies. Questions about the human good and the meaning of life—the morality of abortion, education, law enforcement, the place of religion in society, etc.—that are reserved by the Constitution to the several states have been taken out of their hands; and, by an act of judicial alchemy, they have been transmuted from questions about the human good (properly answered only by legislatures) into questions about constitutional rights (answered by federal judges). Genuine political life and civic virtue cannot survive in a country governed by legalism.

As civic virtue has been lost by radical centralization, so it can be recovered only by an equally radical decentralization. We must seriously consider the project of restructuring the Union itself. This is the view of George F. Kennan, one of the grand old men of the 20th century and the framer of the the "containment policy," which guided America's struggle in the Cold War against the Soviet Union. In his autobiography, *Around the Cragged Hill* (W.W. Norton & Co.), in a chapter entitled "Dimensions," Kennan raises the question of the proper size of a political entity. He concludes that centralization has gone too far and that it is time to think seriously about dividing the Union into more manageable parts. He does not claim to know how to do this, but he is certain that it should be done. He points to 12 rather natural economic and cultural divisions that suggest themselves for smaller unions in what could become a commonwealth of American Unions.

In his hard-hitting book *Downsizing the U.S.A.* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), Thomas Naylor, a retired economist from Duke University, also argues for dissolving the Union by referendum in the direction of a more human scale. A citizen of Vermont, Naylor believes that the northern tier of New England states and the maritime provinces of Canada have more in common in respect to climate, economy, and culture than either do with Los Angeles, Houston, New York, Ottawa, Vancouver, or Montreal. He has proposed that these states and provinces secede from Canada and the United States and form a Federation of Atlantic States. Carolyn Chute, a prize-winning novelist who is running for governor of Maine as a write-in candidate, is sympathetic to Naylor's view that Maine would be better off out of the Union than in it.

The stock objection to any sort of secession is that small states are not economically viable. But viability should not be confused with self-sufficiency. Japan is viable but not self-sufficient, importing 97 percent of her oil and much of her food. The viability of a state depends simply on trade with the rest of the world. Some of the richest states in the world are small: Iceland, Singapore, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Austria. Many states occupy less territory than New York City. Monaco and the Vatican are smaller than Central Park.

Some of the greatest cultural achievements have been the work of small states: Classical Athens had a population of around 50,000; Renaissance Florence, around 40,000. Lucca created a flourishing culture, and for centuries, was one of the richest states in Italy with a population of only 10,000. Moreover, separation from the bureaucratic stranglehold of an overcentralized union can be economically invigorating for both parties. Secession accomplished this in America and Britain in 1783; in Belgium and Holland in 1830; in Norway and Sweden in 1905; and in Singapore and the Malaysian federation in 1965.

The cells of a healthy organ do not continue to grow but split and duplicate to maintain the proper scale of the organ. Endless growth is cancer. Progress occurs in evolution not by endless aggregation of a species but by division, duplication, and diversification. Not only is the American Union an oversized, overfunded, overregulating, and unmanageable bureaucracy, some American states have also grown beyond human scale. Switzerland—about two thirds the size of

To Russia, With Love?

Russia may hold one of the keys to the American future. To discuss and debate the issues arising from the emerging power-triangle of the United States, Russia, and Europe (which all face the threat of militant Islam), The Rockford Institute is joining forces with the Russian Academy of Science in Moscow for a conference exploring the possibilities of a real Northern Alliance.

Tentative speakers include Thomas Fleming, Srdja Trifkovic, and Wayne Allensworth, as well as a line-up of distinguished Russian experts.

We are offering a *very limited* number of places to friends of *Chronicles* and The Rockford Institute.

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South Carolina—is divided into 27 small states, each of which has more sovereignty than any American state. As population grew, American states should have been divided either internally into smaller states, as Switzerland was, or by secession. The latter strategy was followed at first: Kentucky split from Virginia, Vermont from New York, and Maine from Massachusetts.

Critics argue that more states would make the U.S. Senate unwieldy. The same argument is given to retain the law that fixes the number of members of the House of Representatives at 435. That number was fixed in 1910, when there were 90 million Americans. Today, however, there are some 290 million, yielding a ratio of about one representative to every 660,000. This ratio makes a mockery of the idea of the consent of the governed. And what will we say when the population rises to 435 million, yielding one representative for every one million souls? Will we still talk—without breaking into laughter—about our "republican" form of government and of the people giving "consent" through their "representatives" to laws and regulations that bind them and drain the lifeblood out of their cultural inheritance? Or will we, in an attempt to be more "democratic," increase the number of "representatives," thereby pushing the House beyond the human scale needed for deliberation? Or will we finally conclude that the Union itself has become too unwieldy?

George Kennan is right: The Union is already too large and, in time, must be dissolved. The containment policy he authored for managing the Cold War required patience and long-term commitment. For the last 40 years or so, America has been engaged in a cultural Cold War with itself. By sucking political life—and civic virtue—out of the states and local communities, the central government has created a mass society. But the Union is incapable of managing the social destruction it has largely caused, and it may well have to fall back on war as the only means of maintaining its utility and legitimacy. Even now, the global gamesterism of the Union threatens to suck its citizens and their resources into protracted wars. The only way to contain the runaway centralization of the Union is to divide and duplicate it. A centralized plan to decentralize would mean, at best, a mere respite in centralization and, at worst, more centralization in the name of downsizing. This was Jefferson's policy: to contain the central government by binding it with "the chains of the Constitution." But experience has shown that the chains cannot hold.

As with the containment policy for the Soviet Union, this new containment policy for the American Union requires a long-term commitment as well as much education, discussion, and patience. As Kennan has insisted, any division of the Union, if it is to be other than a tragic failure, must reflect the desire of Americans, expressed through conventions of the people of the states. Kennan's containment policy took over 40 years. The new containment policy in this cultural Cold War could take longer. Some Hispanic academics and political leaders predict the emergence of an independent Hispanic state—called "Atzlan"—in the Southwest in about 50 years. They may be right. U.S. immigration policy, the inability of the federal government to enforce its immigration laws, and birthrates are all on their side. Only 30 years ago, California was over 80 percent European. Today, it is only 47 percent. By 2030, California is expected to be less than 20 percent European. So Atzlan might well come to pass, and I, for one, will wish it well. In the meantime, a few of Ambassador Kennan's unions will probably have made their appearance—one of which might even be Dr. Naylor's Atlantic Republic.

Donald W. Livingston is a professor of philosophy at Emory University, author of Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium *(University of Chicago Press), and president of the Abbeville Institute.*

What's Good for General Motors . . .

by David Hartman

How did big corporations become the prevailing form of enterprise in the United States? The standard answer is that bigger is better. Concentrated industry, we are told, allows managerial efficiency, huge economies of scale, and the ability to undertake bold research and development and apply it to better products and increasingly efficient process technology. But the reality is that the big corporate world primarily evolved from mergers and conglomerations, not excellence in the market.

General Motors is, perhaps, the best example. By 1955, General Motors controlled over half of the automotive market in the United States. Was this the result of superior technology and managerial ability? No: It was the result of the conglomeration of Chevrolet, Pontiac, Buick, Oldsmobile, and Cadillac—all formerly independent corporations. Unsatisfied with this hegemony, General Motors "back integrated" some of its most vital suppliers. General Motors also excluded other automaker's vehicles from the dealerships where its automobiles were sold, eliminating competition. The result was the demise of Packard, then Hudson, then Studebaker. One by one, the grand old names of the automotive industry closed their doors.

That same year, 1955, General Motors was hauled before the U.S. Senate to explain how it had become the largest corporation in both the United States and the world and how its investors were able to enjoy twice the average manufacturing return on investment. The Senate wanted to know: "Wouldn't America be better off if General Motors reduced the price of a Chevrolet substantially to make it more affordable for the workingman?" G.M.'s executives responded that, if they reduced the price of a Chevy as much as they could, they would run their competitors out of business. This clearly indicated that G.M. had amassed enough power over the automotive market that it would have been appropriate for the federal government to order the breakup of General Motors into three corporations, require it to dispose of its acquired part suppliers, and force it to allow normal retailing of its products alongside those of its competitors. Had this occurred, there is little doubt in my mind that more than 90 percent of the cars we drive today would be American-made.

Half a century ago, the American people were told that they could not do without the economies of scale at General Motors. How was it, then, that Toyota and Honda—companies a fraction of the size of General Motors at the time—were able to cross the Pacific and secure a sizeable market share by selling better cars at lower prices? Remember "planned obsolescence," three-year styling cycles, and five years to rusted-out hulks? Superior disk brakes that were not adopted by G.M. until decades after they were commonplace in Europe? Or Detroit's refusal to make quality compacts until for-

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eign cars had secured 20 percent of U.S. market share? At those Senate hearings in 1955, Charlie Wilson, the chairman of General Motors, summed up G.M.'s philosophy: "What's good for General Motors is good for the rest of America."

International Business Machine, Inc., provides another good example of the way in which restraint of trade has enabled the dominance of major corporations. IBM was considered to be light-years ahead of its competitors. Were it not for the emergence of Apple's personal computer, IBM mainframes would still dominate the computer industry.

Neither IBM's superior technology nor patents formed the basis of its monopoly. Big Blue prevented competitors from emerging by frustrating the attempts of developers to create software that was compatible with their systems.

Microsoft was given the keys to the kingdom when it was hired by IBM to produce an operating system that would allow IBM to catch up to Apple in the innovative PC market. IBM adopted open architecture, the opposite of their former "mainframe" policy. Now, IBM personal computers would be designed to be compatible with products offered by their competitors. As networked PC's replaced mainframe systems, Microsoft turned the tables on IBM, and Microsoft's continued control over connectivity has been the basis of its current monopoly over PC software.

Bill Gates is, without a doubt, the consummate monopolist. Ask any company that bought Microsoft Windows 98 in 1999, only to be told that it will not be serviced next year. They have to buy Windows XP, not because of its innovative features, but because planned obsolescence is Microsoft's right and privilege as a monopolist. Windows 98 will not run the company's new printers. Those who play ball with Microsoft are granted connectivity, while those who compete are out of luck.

"Think tanks" put out articles on Microsoft that do not refer to antitrust law and do not detail what Microsoft has been doing. They just offer sympathy for "poor little old Microsoft, which is being picked on by the government." This sounds suspiciously like "opinions for sale." Now, after being found guilty of monopolistic practices in federal court, Microsoft is going to be let off with a slap on the wrist. Is justice for sale through corporate "soft money" political contributions?

The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit called into question the emerging corporate lifestyle and its effect on families, which greatly influenced the perspective of a generation of entrepreneurs. But the most radical alteration was the transformation of the power elite. The corporate executive and the chamber of commerce replaced the old guard in the community; the new class sat in judgment of the politics of the city, its environs, and its state, and rubberstamped such cultural revolutions as the socializing of American schools. One consequence was the demise of locality, as power was centralized into regional financial centers.

In most cases, the corporate representatives neither intended nor understood their roles and effects. They were basically being used as shills by the people who were engineering the changing of our society. The plight of real people did not cross their minds. Passing through town on three-year jaunts from one corporate assignment to another, they unwittingly played the role of Pontius Pilate, washing their hands as the localized centers of American society were dismembered by the new corporate state.

Wal-Marts and K-marts dried up local retailers; independent banks became branches of money-center banks; and franchises replaced independent businesses. Good citizenship was replaced by the welfare state. Sending American jobs and dollars abroad, redistributing income, and converting education to social conditioning all contributed to government's beggaring and marginalizing of the family and the voluntary community.

Today, we worship at the altar of technological progress, which we attribute to Fortune 500 corporations, when in fact most innovation comes from small corporations, as does all of net new employment. During the past decade, we have been sold the lie that we have entered a new era of productivity. While the U.S. economy has had a high rate of productivity in such high-tech fields as computers and telecommunications, the old economy's rate of growth of productivity has not deviated from the long-term norm. The rate of growth of productivity in the 1960's was 50 percent higher than what it was in the 90's.

Part of this productivity myth could be called "Gross National Garbage" statistics. You drive Mom out of the home, so the family eats out, because Mom is not cooking anymore; the tax collector accounts for more Gross National Product, and the government collects more taxes. The car Mom drives to work, the extra clothes she needs, and the daycare center that rears her children—all are tallied on the cash register and the Gross National Product goes up even more. Has anyone ever subtracted the loss of real life and community and seen what the *net* looks like?

A process of continual economic concentration is taking place through Wall Street, both at home and abroad. And we can look forward to enjoying less choice under cartels than we would if we had competition. The shaky foundations of the new international economic order are increasingly exposed. The United States is currently running a $400-billion trade deficit, the largest run by any country in history. But we are told by libertarians, "Do not worry, foreigners are reinvesting their gains here in the United States." Didn't we learn that the smart guy in the Manhattan Island deal was Peter Minuit, who took a few trunkloads of trinkets and traded it for Manhattan Island? Now, we are supposed to believe that the trinkets were the good deal and that trading factories and farms and real estate for foreign-made consumer goods bought on credit is good for Americans.

How do we recover our nerve and engage the battle for America? First of all, we must turn off the federal spigot. We need to stop soft-money donations by corporations and unions. Only individuals should be allowed to give to political parties or candidates. We need to end corporate welfare. The federal government dispenses $100 billion of handouts to corporations annually.

We need to restore competition. We need a real antitrust policy. The presumption of this country's economy is that free enterprise and competition are the order of business. When an industry gets to the point where one company dominates the playing field, it is time to restore a competitive structure to that industry.

Bigger is not better. The way of the New Corporate State is the road to fascism. Traditional America was made up of free and locally rooted people, religiously moral and law-abiding families primarily engaged in local enterprise. What's good for General Motors is *not* what made America the envy of the rest of the world.

David Hartman is the chairman of The Rockford Institute's board of directors.

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by George McCartney

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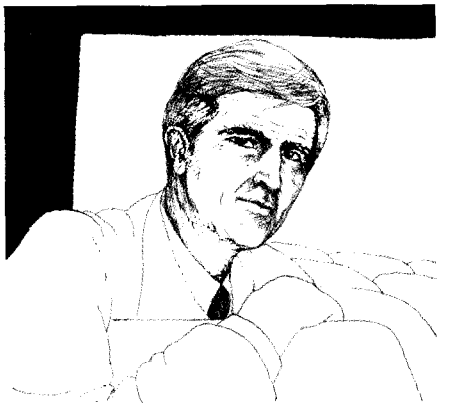

The Time Machine

Produced and distributed by DreamWorks and Warner Bros.
Directed by Simon Wells
Screenplay by John Logan
from a novel by H.G. Wells

Monster's Ball

Produced by Lee Daniels and Mark Urman
Directed by Marc Forster
Screenplay by Milo Addica and Will Rokos
Released by Lions Gate Films

I first read H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* when I was 12 years old. At the time, I had no way of knowing I was turning the pages of a socialist's sour allegory of Darwinian capitalism and its unintended consequences. I only knew I had to find out how the story ended. When I got to the last page, however, I discovered something odd. There was no ending. Instead, the hero known only as the Time Traveler, having come back from one voyage into the future, disappeared on another. What was this? I wasn't disappointed, just mildly shocked. It was, I think, the first time a book had asked me what would happen next. Such respect for the reader was new to me. It was also my first intimation that stories could have consequences for life beyond their covers, that they might point outward from imagination to deeds, expecting readers to act on their own authority. Later, I would discover Wells had written a warning to his own time. Like most good science fiction, his tale concerned the present under the guise of the future. This, oddly, is just what Simon Wells' new screen adaptation of the novel does not do, even though director Wells is the great-grandson of novelist Wells. So much for ancestral reverence.

In the distant future of H.G. Wells' narrative, the Time Traveler discovers a grotesque parody of 19th-century class conflict. The human race has evolved into two decadent subspecies: the gentle, delicate Eloi, who live for beauty and music in a world that has become a permanent garden; and the Morlocks, who live in stygian caverns where they labor tirelessly at the machinery that makes possible the indolent comfort of their cousins above. On one side are the heirs to the Oxbridge twits of Wells' acquaintance, now even more effete and irresponsible than their 1895 forebears; on the other, the vast, beastly progeny of the workers transformed by millennia of dimly lit toil into little hairy beings of great physical quickness and technical dexterity. At first, the Traveler reasons that these descendants of the privileged and the exploited have at last achieved social harmony. Since neither species is capable of sustained critical thought, the Eloi do not feel guilty about their ease, and the Morlocks do not complain of their labor.

On closer inspection, however, the Traveler discovers this new balance in human affairs has come at a grisly cost. The Morlocks have made the Eloi their cattle. They periodically round up the more appetizing specimens and slaughter them for their dinner tables. This is Swift's "Modest Proposal" turned upside down. Seeking to shame his British readers, Swift had recommended they take the next logical step in their economic cannibalism of Ireland and put baked Hibernian infant on their dinner menus. Trading disgust for terror, Wells decided to threaten his upper-class readers. Mend your ways, or be devoured by your lessers. In effect, he was trying to head off the Bolshevik Revolution.

Together with its political agenda, Wells' narrative is filled with mysteries, adventures, and even a love story of sorts—all material that would seem ideal for a screen adaptation. But filmmakers have been unable or unwilling to do it justice. George Pal adapted the book in 1960, and while his film has some charm, it reduces the Eloi-Morlock division to the stock sci-fi explanation of the day: a genetic mutation caused by atomic radiation. In 1979, Nicholas Meyer trivialized the book's conceit in *Time After Time* by making Wells himself the Time Traveler pursuing Jack the Ripper from 19th-century London to 1970's America. Simon Wells has not improved on either effort. Despite Guy Pearce's convincing performance as the abstracted Traveler and some sparkling special effects, Wells' film is a mess of undigested ideas—none of them in concert with his great-grandfather's interests.

Irrelevancies abound throughout the film. In a textually unwarranted interpolation, the Traveler builds his machine so he can go back into the past to prevent his fiance's untimely death. When it seems he will not succeed, he asks obsessively, "Why can't I change the past?" Having given this opening episode so much dramatic space and urgency, Wells drops it altogether in second half of the film. Why? Stopping in the year 2037, the Traveler discovers the moon is shattering into fragments. Why? We never learn. Arriving in the year 802,701, the Traveler meets the Eloi who, instead of the novel's hapless weaklings, turn out to be an athletic collection of multicultural fashion models sporting tribal garb. They look so remarkably healthy and muscular that you can't help wondering why they don't put up a fight when the Morlocks come to get their next meal. As for the Morlocks, instead of lemur-like techies, they are a disappointing crew of brawny actors in hairy bodysuits and oversized yellow-eyed masks. With the help of special effects, they leap and skitter about as though they have lost their place in Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

By departing from the novel's premise, the film not only violates the original story's logic but sacrifices its distinctive vision. It is all too apparent that Simon Wells has no genuine interest in his great-grandfather's novel beyond the commercial value of its well-known title. Deeming the story's subtext irrelevant to its plot, the filmmakers have discarded it entirely, freeing themselves to embroider and invent at the leaden whim of their

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special-effects department. But the energy of a narrative such as this resides precisely in the author's political and philosophical intentions. After all, they are what drove Wells to write his story in the first place. Discard the book's inner life, and you are left with a tasteless rind. It's as if someone were to film *Paradise Lost* and leave out Milton's theology. Wells is no Milton, but he deserves better than this, especially at the hands of his own progeny. Or was Simon Wells intent on proving one of his great-grandfather's fears? H.G. often warned that our moral imagination might decay as we become increasingly dependent on technology. Can it be that the Time Traveler's lament from the year 802,701—"I grieved to think how brief the dream of the human intellect had been. It had committed suicide"—is already coming true?

Speaking of suicide, in Swiss director Mark Foster's *Monster's Ball*, several characters resort to its felicity. Some of the audience may feel like joining them after watching this half-baked essay on the state of American racism.

The story concerns the unlikely relationship between Hank (Billy Bob Thornton), a white corrections officer, and Leticia (Halle Berry), a black woman desperately down on her luck.

Following in his father's footsteps, Hank does death-row duty at a Georgia penitentiary, where he's in charge of wafting his mostly black clientele to their final reward. He is so glumly devoted to the family calling that he has brought his own son, Sonny, aboard. A family that slays together, it seems, stays together, however unhappily. The three men live in a household unleavened by feminine influence and suffused with a reflexive but waning racism. Hank's mother committed suicide. His wife vacated the premises long ago, no doubt depressed by Thornton's nearly catatonic performance in the film's earlier scenes. Then there's the unsunny Sonny, played by Heath Ledger with all the verve of a human mold spore. Unmarried, he makes do with occasional visits from a prostitute so perfunctory that a Sealy PosturePedic would seem passionate by comparison. Oh, the dysfunction of it all. These working-class honkies are marinating in a miasma of misogyny and racism.

We meet these gentlemen on the eve of an execution. Hank and Sonny are in charge of hot-seat candidate Sean "Puffy" Combs, playing an African-American who is, for once, actually guilty as charged, a rarity in film land. Puff Daddy even admits that he has done something really, really bad. (Could it be a capital crime to besmirch Jennifer Lopez's titanium reputation?) A few nights after Hank fries Puffy, he meets P. Diddy's wife, Leticia, at the diner he frequents. Coincidentally, she's just been hired as a late-night waitress. Not aware of his role in her husband's death, she's glad to serve him his usual order: chocolate ice cream, which he insists on eating with a white plastic spoon. This is symbolic foreshadowing. You see, the spoon stuck in the ice cream represents . . . never mind.

Hank and Leticia are both grieving—she, for her husband, and he, for his son who, following family tradition, has just pulled the trigger on himself. They meet a second time—again, by chance—when Hank comes upon Leticia moments after her 11-year-old son has been run down by a hit-and-run driver. Hank rushes them to the hospital, but the boy is dead on arrival. A few days later, Hank chances upon Leticia yet again and drives her home. Having brought them together so often and established their need for consolation so emphatically, the script now engineers the characters onto Leticia's sofa for the Big Scene, the one to which the movie's ads so coyly allude. Yes, by golly, Hank and Leticia actually get naked and sweaty on her couch.

Although the script means to astonish us with this interracial clinch, such a romance is not all that surprising. These are two people whom suffering has unmoored from their provincial notions. They meet beyond the usual categories of their respective tribes. Their emotions are kicked up; they are within arms' length of one another; and they are attractive—Billy Bob, reasonably, and Miss Berry unreasonably so. (She does her best to look plain but fails beautifully.)

Still, as staged, their romance is entirely unconvincing. We cannot help feeling bullied by the script's muscle-bound contrivances. Foster and his scriptwriters Milo Addica and Will Rokos are hellbent to place Miss Berry and Mr. Thornton on that couch, and they do not care how improbably they do so. Of course, they have a higher purpose than showing Miss Berry in her altogether. (Strangely, the camera seems far less interested in Mr. Thornton.) Foster wants us to understand that the racial barrier is being dissolved in the heat of the couple's overmastering passion, etc., etc.

As is always the case when big stars doff their duds—the better to conduct athletic sex—this scene has been hailed as courageous, honest, and sincere. The one thing it is not, however, is aesthetic. When actors get naked, they may or may not sin morally, but there is no question that they do so aesthetically. Bare-assed on the divan, Miss Berry and Mr. Thornton are no longer Leticia and Hank: They are merely themselves. As such, the drama in which they are playing comes—you'll pardon the expression—to a grinding halt. Rather than continue to suspend our disbelief, we can't help dwelling on some distracting real-world questions. Were they embarrassed in front of the film's technicians? What do their respective spouses think of their whole-hog performances? The less sophisticated in the audience might even wonder if their full body contact onscreen led to further intimacies off. "For heaven rest us," as Jerome Kern and Dorothy Fields memorably put it, "we're not asbestos."

Monster's Ball alludes to the prison-keepers' celebration following an execution. Drop the apostrophe, however, and it becomes an unintended vulgar pun for two outsized egos engaging in what comes naturally. For all its good intentions, the film is finally little more than this. C

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

A Journey to the Bottom of the World

The plane took off to the east out of Denver, banked steeply right, and came round on a southwest heading: over Pike's Peak, the Sangre de Christo Mountains, and the Great Sand Dunes National Monument; across the San Luis Valley, the upper Rio Grande, and the San Juan Mountains; over Chaco Canyon, with a view of Shiprock Peak and the Chuska Mountains to the west; over Gallup, New Mexico, and on across the Painted Desert and the Little Colorado; over the Mogollon Rim with its dusting of snow, the Salt River winding in its steep-sided gorge, and the Superstition Mountains on our approach into Phoenix. At Sky Harbor, I transferred to an America West De Haviland and continued the journey north, above Camp Verde, Cottonwood, and Sedona (with a salute to Col. Jeff Cooper in Paulden) off the left wing.

Tom Sheeley awaited me at Pulliam Field in Flagstaff. We shared an *abrazo* inside the terminal, and I felt the grizzly-sized hump of muscle below his neck from the training he'd been doing all winter. Tom hoisted the expandable soft-sided suitcase containing my backpack, camp equipment, and clothing, and preceded me through the door and into the parking lot. "We're going to Chili's," he said. "Bet you can't handle one of those thirty-ounce beers."

We took a seat at a table in the bar and waited for Cory to spot us. When she came in her black Chili's shirt with the menus, I stood to give her a bear hug. "Are you excited?" she wanted to know. "People ask me what I'm doing over spring break, and when I tell them I'm going hiking in the Grand Canyon for nine days, they're like, 'You mean you sleep on the *ground*?'—What do you want to eat, D?" Tom and I ordered two plates of spicy chicken wings with the beer and settled down to earnest political conversation, deploring the Axis of Evil and pounding the tabletop like Germans to express our enthusiasm for military tribunals, Attorney General Ashcroft, war on Iraq, and National Greatness Conservatism.

Next morning, still a little under the influence of the chicken wings, we went shopping downtown for the last-minute incidentals, including four half-pints of rum and the crampons Tom insisted were necessary in the event of ice on the trail. We drank non-alcoholic beer with our supper and everyone was in bed by nine o'clock, to be up at five when our ride arrived to deliver us to the jumping-off place on the Havasupai Indian Reservation. I rode with Dave Pederson, a student of Tom's at Northern Arizona University, following the Sheeleys in The Gold Pony (pronounce with a strong Navajo accent) on the way up to the Canyon.

Black rain clouds swirled about the San Francisco Mountains as we departed Flagstaff, and a sweeping blizzard whited out the South Rim when we arrived at Tusayan for the Sixteenth Annual Spring Break Marathon. Tom parked the pick-up near the backcountry office. He and Cory, with their packs, climbed into the Jeep with Dave and me, and the four of us started out under clearing skies along the snowy track skirting the canyon rim westward 35 miles across the pinyon-juniper forest to the head of the South Bass Trail.

The Indian standing guard at the Havasupai boundary to exact the customary $25 toll was away from his post. The Jeep rolled across without halt, and half an hour later Tom, Cory, and I were telling David goodbye as we started down South Bass, an old Indian trail developed in the 1920's by William Wallace Bass, a prospector and miner who, for some years, operated a mine in Copper Canyon and maintained a small farm that he irrigated with water from Shinumo Creek. The Bass Trail, one of the roughest in the Grand Canyon, lies west of the heavily used part of the South Rim and is maintained only by the boots of the relatively few hikers who venture on it.

I had sworn for years I'd never get under a backpack like a damn burro, and now (for the second time in less than a year) I was carrying 65 pounds on my shoulders—20 accounted for by the two-and-a-half deadweight gallons of water Tom had determined each of us should bring to last two days, if necessary—down a steep northwest aspect of the Grand Canyon, over rocks treacherously covered with a skim of ice too thin for crampons to grip. Tom in the lead, and Cory behind me, were whistling cheerfully. But not me. Already, we'd dropped a few hundred feet down the face of the buff-colored Coconino Formation—too far to scramble back up and catch Dave before he got started along the two-track for Flagstaff, comfortably powered by internal combustion engine. It took 90 minutes to climb only a mile and a half down to the Esplanade that rests above the Supai Formation, where Tom called a halt among the twisted trees standing around potholes filled with water deposited by the early storm.

"We're fat," he said, admiring the potholes. "There has to be water at Serpentine tomorrow night. That means we won't have to carry all this water with us from camp to camp."

That was very good news indeed, I agreed. Already, the pack straps seemed to have sawed halfway through my shoulder bones, while my cocyx felt pounded to jelly by the water bottles nestled at the bottom of the pack.

"Hiking the Canyon's like playing football without the coach to yell at you," Tom suggested. "You just keep on taking it until you're exhausted, then you go ahead and take it some more. I love it, man!"

We climbed from the Supai through a notch in the rock, skirted the head of Bass Canyon, then dropped down the Redwall toward the Tonto Platform by a series of rubble-filled switchbacks that straightened out in a brushy defile choked with acacia and sawgrass before contouring above Bass Creek to an overhang of rock above the Tapeats, where we made camp. Cory and Tom had their tent half-raised as I strolled up with my bare legs bleeding from the catclaw and bristling with tiny thorns, my wind still good and my knees

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strong beneath the pack that had become as punishing and oppressive as the True Cross carried for five miles and as many hours, up Mt. Ararat and down the other side. "Hel-*lo*," Cory told me with a mischievous smile. There's nothing like finding a pretty girl in camp at the end of the trail—almost nothing, anyway. "Take this," Tom said, offering me the blessed cylinder from his pack: a miraculous can of Icehouse beer, still slightly chill to the touch.

We went to bed with the sun and rose with it next morning after a full 12 hours in the sleeping bags. Doves called from up canyon as we drank our morning coffee sweetened with Ybarra chocolate, struck camp, and stowed it away in the packs for the six-mile hike over to Ruby Canyon.

"Rippin' it up on the Tonto" is the Sheeleyism appropriate to the effort. Amateurs, fools, or those who have never actually set foot on it often describe the Tonto Plateau above the inner gorge of the Colorado River as "flat." In fact, the topography of the Tonto is rolling, and the Tonto Trail itself an up-and-down affair as it heads each long canyon in turn as far back as the intersection of the drainage with the Tapeats Formation on which the plateau rests, contours along the opposite side to the end of the Redwall, rounds it on an uphill grade followed by a downhill one across desert hardpan thickly covered with blackbrush and cactus, then heads the next canyon behind the Redwall. Three quarters or more of the distance along the Tonto is thus accounted for by the diversion around the Tapeats—which is where the trail becomes brutal as it traverses steep washes and precarious rockslides on its way down to the creek and up again on the other side. To anticipate flatness on the Tonto in planning a hike is similar to anticipating warmth in the Grand Canyon—or any other desert—simply because it *is* a desert. And as dangerous.

Tramp, tramp, tramp . . . The marching music in my head is Mozart's *Piano Sonata Number 11 in A Major* played over and over again. If it weren't for the 65-pound incubus squatting on my shoulders, this adventure into the stony bowels of the earth would be a heavenly excursion; as it is, the experience is more like Hell on earth. Tramp, tramp . . . I think of Ed Abbey on his 120-mile walk across the Cabeza Prieta Wildlife Refuge in the 1980's. My legs, though hurting, are strong and will grow stronger, my wind superb. *This* is what it feels like to be 60 pounds overweight: How does anyone stand even 20 or 30? Setting your feet under such a load over loose rocks and boulders, up and down steep and crumbling trail, is like learning to walk again, with a handicap. Twenty years of reading trail from the saddle, guiding a horse over so much bad footing, helps, though the mental strain is considerable. But the pack is torture—whether because my deltoids are undeveloped or the internal-frame pack doesn't fit properly I have too little experience to tell. Tom and Cory swear by external-frame models; they're a quarter- to a half-mile out ahead now, hardly pausing to consider the next step in even the roughest places. Tramp, tramp, tramp . . . I'm never out of breath, yet this shoulder pain is killing me anyway. No choice but to go on, though—drawing hard on the tube coming around from the camelback, not from thirst but because it's easier to carry the water weight in my belly than on my back. You got yourself down here, Williamson, and you'll have to get yourself out in the same way. To hell with the discomfort, to hell with the pain. They're ignorable, finally, with the help of Mozart and the huge outrageous scenery beneath the whirling Van Gogh sun. No one can help you but yourself—or hinder, either. *That's why, even in so much misery, I'm loving it down here.* A pair of bighorn rams, bounding across the trail behind our advance guard, are surprised by the trailer and redouble their efforts in the direction of the talus piled at the base of the end wall of Serpentine Canyon.

At Serpentine, there was water! Not much, but something—enough. The Sheeleys awaited me beside the meager pool, their packs resting beside them on the rock ledge. I unbuckled mine and shed it like a great unwieldy carapace atop a boulder: Relieved of the dread weight, I felt instantly transformed, like a spirit rid of the burden of corrupt mortality. All too soon, on the march again to Ruby, I was under saddle once more, one of the souls imagined by pagan philosophers as being condemned to an eternal alternation between the coexistence of body and spirit and the spirit's detachment from the corporeal self.

We made nine miles that day, ate the hearty supper (an astounding pasta) prepared by Tom as if out of thin air, and were in the bags by a quarter to seven, watching the light fade through the nylon tent and feeling the muscles in the calves of our legs cramp slowly.

Day three established a routine as we worked eastward above the river, in and out of the Jewels—Ruby, Turquoise, and Agate Canyons—hiking between six and nine miles a day. Everywhere, we found water, pumping the quart and liter bottles full for drinking, cooking, and other use around camp. The loads lightened as we ate down on our supplies, until I was carrying not very much above the equivalent of a magnum rifle, ammunition, and a comprehensive survival pack. At Turquoise, Tom recovered the first of four caches he had left over the past three weeks, and there was beer again to go with the bloody steaks we'd packed down from Tom's butcher in Flag. We spent a layover day sunning among the rocks and continued on to Slate Creek, where Chris Mandrick arrived after dark at the end of a 15-mile hike down from Hermit's Rest, bringing provisions and mail posted by Barbara Sheeley in Flagstaff. The Slate Creek cache, deposited by Tom in the course of a one-day, 27-mile marathon, contained a 1.75-liter bottle of Gilbey's gin, so we had a party on the second layover day at Slate, culminating in a Diversity Dance on top of a mescal pit built a millennium ago by Anasazi Indians.

From Slate Creek, it was an easy five miles over to Boucher Creek, and down the watercourse another mile to Boucher Rapids on the Colorado River. Tom, Cory, Chris, and I sat crosslegged on the beach, working our toes into sand that was warm less than an inch below the surface and passing a fifth of Bushmill's between us as we gazed at the green water thundering between walls of primeval Vishnu Schist (black as night and 1.5 billion years old, the oldest exposed rock in the world) that 133 years before had borne the one-armed John Wesley Powell downstream, seated in his armchair perilously secured to the deck of his little boat. From the beach, the notch where the Boucher Trail—second steepest in the Grand Canyon, hand over hand in places—cuts through on its way up to the top of the Redwall was visible 2,000 feet above: the first leg of our return route to the upper world.

"Work and play are really one and the same thing," Tom said. "They ought to be, anyway."

"Won't it feel wonderful to be climbing uphill again tomorrow?" Cory asked.

In fact, with my pack down to only 50 pounds, it felt much better than that. c

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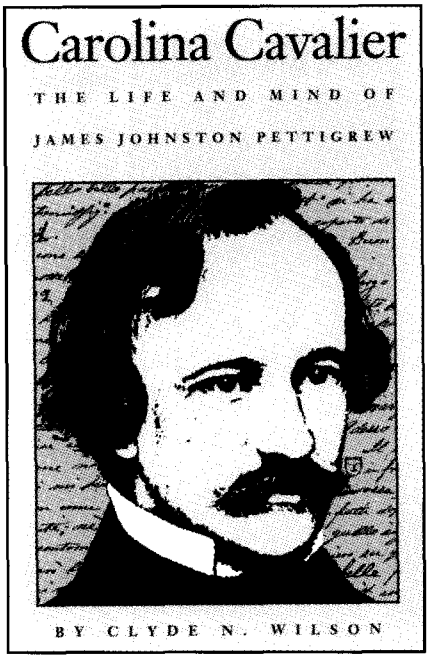

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